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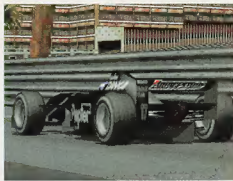
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PC GAMING WORLD

This pic: Black & White. Middle Inset: Warcraft III. Middle Left: Final Fantasy VIII. Middle Right: Grand Prix 3. Bottom: C&C: Renegade



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We went to the annual European Computer Trade Show at Olympia and brought back news of all the hottest new games, including C&C: Renegade, Black & White, Half-Life Team Fortress 2, Warcraft III, Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, Final Fantasy VIII, Hitman, Messiah and more

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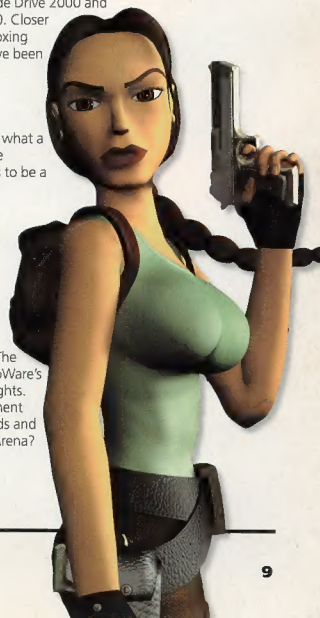
Only one game this month, but what a game it is! Origin's sequel to the impressive System Shock proves to be a winner

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IT'S TIME

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21ST OCTOBER

COMMUNICATIONS

I pay £35 a game like every other Joe out there and as a previous owner of a now prehistoric P100 with 8Mb RAM, I always look at a game's specs before I decide to buy it. I have recently worked my way up to a PC with an AMD K6-2 333MHz processor but I still look at the manufacturer's minimum specs for a laugh. Now this may sound trivial, but every specifications list I see, in your magazine and on boxes, always mentions Intel PII and PIII as compatible CPUs but not any other chip, like my AMD. This sometimes worries me as I feel that my computer may not be getting the best out of games. Is the AMD chip specifically supported in games?

G Ward, Cheshire
The AMD K6-2 is a perfectly good gaming chip especially when you take price into account. Its native floating point performance (FPU) is a bit suspect, but not horribly so. You'll find that the chip you have approximately equates with a 300MHz Pentium II. As for specific support, yes there is. It's called 3DNow! and you will find it listed on a decent percentage of games, particularly first- and third-person shooters where it gives a performance boost of around 15 per cent (it's essentially an FPU boost).

I read your Tiberian Sun review last issue and thought it was well argued, but I have to disagree with the conclusions. Having just bought, played and been disappointed with the game I have to say 'more of the same' sums it up best. Why am I surprised? I can't think of single major sequel that has given me the same pleasure as the original (Dungeon Keeper 2, SimCity 3000, Alpha Centauri, Populous III and the Tomb Raider games spring to mind). The novelty of

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I am a die-hard gamer who loves Team Fortress Classic but my connection is always so bad I'm constantly getting killed by snipers. Why? Because I cannot get ADSL or cable because I live in what seems to be an unimportant part of the UK and neither service seems to be coming here. I have disregarded ISDN because it costs too much to run as a result of the two call charges (my phone bill is already £400 a quarter which is way too much). So I'm left with a V.90 56K connection via the phone. The problem is that I'm not connecting at anywhere near 56K! I nearly always seem to be connecting at around 28K, while my friends connect at around 40K through the same ISP (ClaraNet) using the same modem. I've tried everything at this stage - I've changed ISP, changed modem, and changed my settings a million times. I've changed drivers and dialled different numbers to the ISP. But nothing works. Have I got something left to try or should I pack my bags and move to London?

Neil Payne, Stamford, Lincs

Your problem is an old one that all online gamers have to face. However there are a few things we should point out. Firstly while Team Fortress Classic is a fine game, it plays very poorly on the Net even on a very good connection. If your connection is not great, a game like Starsiege Tribes will offer a much better experience. As far as cable and ADSL are concerned, as you say these services appear to be rolling out in heavily populated areas first. ADSL is also not looking as cheap an option as we first thought at up to £200 a month! Fortunately ISDN is much easier to obtain and the price difference for a hard-core gamer with a £400 phone bill is minimal. You really ought to look at this option. You won't actually have to pay twice because generally you only have to use one line for a 64K connection which is superb for gaming. ISDN + 0800 BT Internet access on a weekends might actually save you money. And it's now less than £60 to convert your phone line to Home Highway ISDN, although I believe you have to be within 5km of a telephone exchange to get Home Highway installed. As far as your existing connection goes, it sounds like there is a telephone service quality issue. Ask BT to examine the line more closely: if you normally experience line noise that could be the problem. Try the following site for more info on Home Highway: www.homehighway.bt.com/

learning a new game concept has to be a large part of the fun. Maybe the only solution for me is either not to buy the sequels, or to exercise incredible restraint and not buy the 'new' games as they come out, waiting for the sequel instead. You know, the same as the first game only with all the gameplay bugs sorted out, and lots more units and options.

Tony Johnson, via email

So you're essentially telling us that you're not interested in say, GTA2, Quake III or Grand Prix 3 then...?

At the moment the most exciting Grand Prix season for years is in progress, with British drivers in contention, Jordan in third place in the constructors championship and everything to play for between

Hakkinen, Coulthard and Irvine. I've bought a couple of recent Grand Prix games and they were pretty but nothing like the real thing so I keep going back to MicroProse's Grand Prix 2 out of desperation. When is Geoff Crammond going to take his finger out and give us the game we've been waiting for? I mean, does MicroProse take pleasure in taking years to develop games - remember Falcon 4.0

Robert Laine, Boston, Lincs

You've probably already seen that Grand Prix 3 is indeed nearing completion if you've read this month's ECTS report and it is looking the biz. Only thing is, it's based on the '98 season teams and drivers... As for shippage, MicroProse is no worse than anyone else - it's a problem that dogs game developers. But yes, there was Falcon 4.0 of course...

Help! When I installed Klignon Honor Guard it asked me if I had a 3Dfx card and would I like to use the card? I said yes to all that, then I got a critical failure message and the game locks if I try to use my 3D card. I'm using a Guillemot Maxi Gamer Phoenix card on a P200MMX with 64Mb of RAM. I enjoy the game in software mode but why have a 3Dfx card if I can't use it?

B McDevitt, via email

The quick and dirty answer to this is that you almost certainly need a patch. That card is based on the 3Dfx Banshee chip which is notorious (at least compared to 3Dfx's Voodoo chips) for needing game-specific patches. Go to www.3dfx.com and download the latest driver updates for your card and also look for a specific patch for Honor Guard.

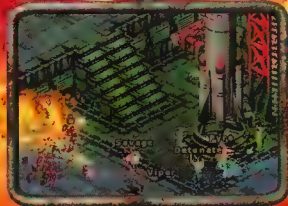
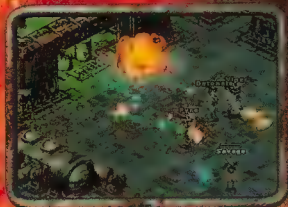


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• Email: pcgw_mail@zd.com • Web: http://www.pcgaming.co.uk

Editorial

Editor-in-Chief: David Kelly (email: david_kelly@zd.com)
Executive Editor: Alan Dyles (email: alan_dyles@zd.com)
Reviews Editor: Cal Jones (email: cal_jones@zd.com)
Associate Editor: John Bennett (email: john_bennett@zd.com)
New Media Editor: Matt Bettinson (email: matt_bettinson@zd.com)
Art Editor: Gordon Barwick (email: gordon_barwick@zd.com)
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Section Editors:

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Additional Contributors:

Designs: Gary Hutchins • Production: Julie Fuller • US Liaison: Tim Price
Articles: Lloyd Case, Raphael Liberatore, Simon Shaw, Paul Dita, Craig Peterson, Simon Quirk, Matt Peck, Dr Kenji Takeda, Roy Steel

Advertising & Marketing:

Advertisement Director: Justine Shawson (justine_shawson@zd.com)
Account Manager: Danielle Mulken (danielle_mulken@zd.com) • Account
Executive: David Summison (david_summison@zd.com) • Marketing Executive
Web: Timmons.wiki (timmons@zd.com)

Production:

Production Director: Joanne Hart • Production Manager: Jackie Bryant
Digital Production Supervisor: Warren • Head Production Controller:
Scott Matthews

Circulation:

Circulation Director: Wendy Sly • Newsstand Manager: Peter Harter
Circulation Manager: Wendy Gregory
Circulation Assistant: Rachel Beresford
If you have problems obtaining your PC Gaming World in your local
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Publishing:

Publisher: David Kelly

Computer Gaming World (US):

Editorial Director: Johnny Wilson (johnny_wilson@zd.com)
Editor-in-Chief: George Jones (email: george_jones@zd.com)
Executive Editor: Ken Brown (ken_brown@zd.com)
Publisher: Lee Unkrich (lee_unkrich@zd.com)

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Fundamentally the exciting stuff in life is new stuff. Solving some new challenge at work. Moving into a new home or neighbourhood. Going to new places. Meeting new people.

When we pay to be entertained we expect the 'new experience' quotient to be higher than in real life. We expect to be thrilled and surprised. If it's a movie we expect to go places we haven't been, and to see things that amaze us. The major difference in a game is that we expect to be interacting with places we've never been. We expect to actually feel like we've gone there. And we expect to make choices there that will lead

us to experience things we have never seen before.

I have just spent three days in sweltering heat at Europe's largest games trade show, ECTS, earlier this

month at Olympia in London. And I'm pleased to report there is much to be positive about. The first games magazine I ever worked on was in 1983 and over the last 15 or so years there have obviously been enormous changes. I even remember going to IBM's press conference to announce the launch of the PC and thinking, because the specification was so lame compared with Apple's offering, 'That'll never work!' Like any entertainment industry, with games there are times of great innovation and times of consolidation. There's nothing wrong with C&C Tiberian Sun or Grand Theft Auto 2 whatsoever – they are solid developments of tried and tested formulas. But they are from the Old Order, if you will.

The groundwork is now in place for a sea change in gaming – driven by never-before-seen levels of processor power. You can see the roots of it in games like Half-Life, Hidden & Dangerous and in this issue's

Homeworld and Halo – it's the ability to create interactive 3D worlds with true characterisation and depth of plot. And there were several stand-out titles shown for the first time at ECTS which take gaming forward.

The first is WarCraft III. It takes a courageous company to take its strongest franchise and throw away the rulebook to create something entirely new and innovative. But that's what Blizzard has done – and the results are breathtakingly different.

The next is Peter Molyneux's Black & White. The interesting stuff here is in the player's relationship with their personalised

game character, and Black & White seeks to create real artificial personality for that character using spectacular morphing and AI technologies. And then there is C&C

The groundwork is now in place for a sea change in gaming...

Renegade. Here Westwood is taking the same sort of risks as Blizzard with WarCraft – but the transition from 2D to 3D appears seamlessly accomplished and Renegade is an exciting prospect. Check them all out for yourselves in our extensive ECTS coverage that begins on page 48.

PS You may notice we've made some changes to the look of PC Gaming World this month. This is part of our continuing efforts to make the magazine as easy to use and as good to look at as we can. You will see we've put back the Pros and Cons for larger reviews – we did that because you asked us to do so in letter and email feedback. If you have other views on the magazine please write or email me – your suggestions and comments are welcome!

David Kelly, Editor-in-chief

Contact David by letter, or by email at david_kelly@zd.com

Real Speed, Real Teams, Real Bikes... Can you handle the power of the fastest accelerating and breaking machine in the world today? *GP500* lets you race the main event: the 500cc World Championship. Can you take it to the limit under pressure from the best riders in the world? It's about technique, knowing the track, knowing your opponents, understanding your 500cc powerhouse.

Race against a sophisticated AI that incorporates real riders' styles and performance! You can almost feel rival racers breathing down your neck for each corner and straight!

Change all bike set-ups to suit you. Take on Quick Race, Single Race, Championship Season and Multiplayer with 16 human players competing via Internet, LAN, Direct Connection and Modem.

"This game gave me the biggest adrenaline rush I've ever had without hitting 180 mph on a real track."

Kenny Roberts Jr. Team Suzuki

Actual Screen Shots





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GRAND PRIX RACE SIMULATOR

GP 500



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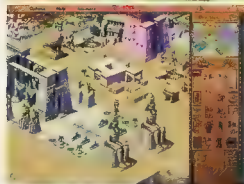
PC CD-ROM

EYE CANDY



TOP LEFT: Hero Squall Linnheart brings a new meaning to flamewars in Final Fantasy VIII
BOTTOM LEFT: Kurt dusts off his rubber fetish wear for MDK2
CIRCULAR INSET: Lee Hong is one of your many targets in Hitman
THIS PAGE: A lora lora Lara: Ms Croft gets set to get set in The Last Revelation





PHARAOH

GENRE: Strategy & Wargaming **LABEL:** Sierra **DEVELOPER:** Impressions

It's a wonder that there haven't been more games based around ancient Egypt, it's certainly rich territory for strategy. Impressions is always on the lookout for a good race of people to strategise, having been through Britain in *Lords Of The Realm*, Rome in the *Caesar* series and who knows how many American Civil War scenarios. And now it's settled on Egypt between the years 3200 and 1500 BC.

I wouldn't pretend to be an expert on this period of history, my knowledge being limited to Indiana Jones and TV documentaries claiming that aliens built the pyramids, but according to Impressions this spans four different time periods: the pre-pharaohic, the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the pithyly titled New Kingdom. These also represent stages in the game – with the first being a kind of tutorial to get you

up to speed, the second allowing you to get on with the business of running a kingdom and building monuments, the third entwining you in political intrigue and foreign conquest and the fourth allowing you to do what you like because you're now so experienced.

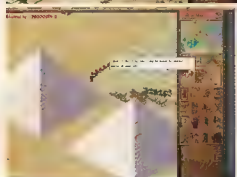
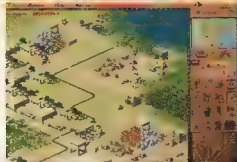
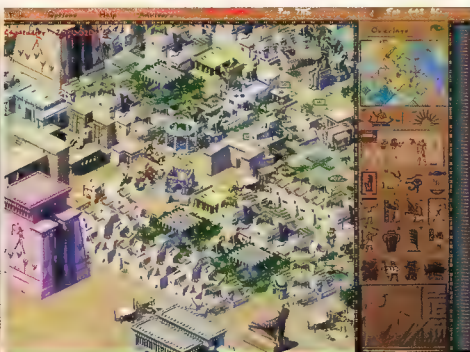
This is a *City Building* game following firmly in the footsteps of *Caesar III*. For the uninitiated it's like an ancient version of *SimCity 2000* – with war, papyrus and ostriches. You get to control one city at a time with the object of building it up to be a true jewel of the Nile, as it were. But the real reason for playing the game is to have yourself worshipped by the Egyptians and honoured by building a gigantic pyramid. The Pharaohs



were living gods and you play one of them, so naturally you're going to want your pointy thing in the desert – and the bigger, the better. The game is also dynastic, and if you don't finish your pyramid, your son will have to. Pyramids are designed by you, and can get so big they don't even fit in the game screen. Pyramids aren't the only monumental structures in the game, though – there are six others in various sizes (19 in total) including sphinxes, obelisks and a sun temple. These are the only buildings in the game that have to be literally 'built', stone by stone, or carved – hour after hour – into the shapes we're all famil-

iar with. All the other buildings in Pharaoh need a specific amount of resources and like *Caesar III*, once you have the requisite kit, the building will be constructed immediately as soon as you zone it. However, buildings will not become operational until they are populated with workers.

The variety of buildings and professions in Pharaoh is truly mind-boggling, and runs from simple farmers to jugglers, musicians, dancers, embalmers, papyrus makers, brewers and more. Services include police, educational academies, libraries and schools and, of course, fire control. It's hot out there. Everything is interdependent in Pharaoh so, for instance, schools



need papyrus, which comes from papyrus makers, who need reed collectors for their raw materials. There are over 60 different types of buildings in the game and housing alone has 20 different stages of evolution.

Religion is of major importance and there are 15 different gods, as opposed to five in Caesar. These are actually broken down into five major gods, each of which has two subservient minions. You can build temples of various sizes for the main gods and then add to them to worship the sub-gods. Temples make gods happy. Happy gods will smite enemies and give priests extra powers to make people happier, or to prevent crime, or increase work abilities.

The economy of ancient Egypt was

built around the fertile flood plains of the Nile and you have to be aware of the season and make good use of the land. Although you'll only get one harvest from the flood plains it will be the most bountiful, but it's a risky business and crops have to be planted and harvested in time. Food can be grown in non-floodplain terrain, but this is much less productive. You can also hunt gazelles and ostriches, but like reeds and wood, animal resources are scarce on the edge of the desert and over-hunting or over-harvesting will have a disastrous effect on their numbers.

Militarily, Pharaoh has Infantry, Archers and Charioteers, the last being used as shock troops to break up enemy formations. Ships also play an important element in the game—and of course they use oarsmen. Naval weapons were fairly primitive at that time and your ships are only equipped with archers. However, you

can sink an opposing ship by ramming it. This is done by whipping your oarsmen into a frenzy, whereupon they will have a short burst of high speed. If you've manoeuvred your ship into an ideal position before you do this, you'll send them to Davy Jones' Locker.

There are 40 cities in Pharaoh, though to actually complete a campaign you may only come across about 25 of these, depending on which path you follow—military or economic. Either way, the sheer scale of the game is impressive and it should turn out to be a true city/god genre classic.

THE PITCH: Caesar III in Egypt with new pathing and AI

THE PROSPECTS: The last game did well and this one is even bigger and better designed

DUE: November

GAMESPOT UK NEWS

● A hot rumour occupying much time among the games industry's chattering classes is that Microsoft is just a month or so away from announcing a PC-based games console. Designed to go head-to-head with Sony's PlayStation 2, the machine is reported to be a one-plug all-in-one unit including 500MHz processor and built-in Nvidia GeForce 3D technology. IBM, Dell and Gateway have all been named as possible manufacturers for the new console. The proposed machine would be a defence against PlayStation 2's internet-ready technology and would form part of Microsoft's plan to own the emerging consumer internet set-top box market. Microsoft is denying the rumour. If true, it's unclear how the machine would affect Sega's new Windows CE-based Dreamcast console, which is due to launch in the UK on 14 October

● 3Dfx has slashed the price of its popular Voodoo3 2000 and 3000 3D cards. Effective immediately, the 2000 comes down from £99 to a very reasonable £79 and the 3000 is a bargain at £129, reduced from £149. The 2000 model price-drop applies to both the PCI and AGP versions

● Nintendo has revealed details of a new GameBoy handheld games device, with the working name of GameBoy Advance. The 32-bit colour machine will be capable of hooking on to the internet via a mobile phone connection, and also features a digital camera add-on allowing multiplayer games players to view one another. Projected to be available Winter 2000

● Sega's self-styled 'viral' marketing campaign for its new Dreamcast console in the US included, last month, gatecrashing Sony's main PlayStation trade golfing event by air-dropping a consignment of Dreamcast-branded golf balls among the attendees

Have I been you somewhere before?



quanticdream

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PC
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GENRE: Sport **LABEL:** Infogrames **DEVELOPER:** Housemarque

Phat air off the half-pipe' may mean little to some, beyond the possibility of a rather embarrassing gastric condition. But to those crazy dudes in their low-crotch'd baggy uniforms (god bless their rampant individuality) hurling themselves down vertical slopes, through waist-deep powder and into tendon-wrenching spins, jumps and turns, it's the be all and end all. Snowboarding, the ultimate rush.

Traditionally, boarding games – be it snowboarding or skateboarding – have been more of a console passion (think Cool Boarders on the N64). PC offerings have been afterthoughts at best, or at worst something displaying a poorly pixellated view of someone's arse disappearing down a hill (sometimes regarded at PCGW as the brown-eye view).

Supreme Snowboarding hopes to rectify this with a sophisticated game combining the larger-than-life attitude (this is, after all, a sport that collectively wet itself laughing when one of its members tested positive for a herbal performance boost at the last Winter Olympics) with a properly detailed simulation of riders, boards and conditions across a number of events.

The game will offer three different downhill environments – Alpine, Forest and Ski Resort – each with three main tracks, three different half-pipes and three ramps. There are Single Race, Championship and Arcade modes (with a rather swish replay feature which allows for immediate post-crunch analysis of aerial wipe-outs) where your main concerns are either competitive racing or points-based Half-Pipe, boarderX or Big Air events.

There will also be a practice option so that you can get the hang of controlling your board and performing tricks. There's a simple but flexible system for performing these improbable manoeuvres while strapped to one of the 10 high performance tea-trays: simply position yourself in line for a jump and hold down the control key to power it up, simultaneously use the



arrow keys to indicate the degree of horizontal and vertical trickery and, lo, your first 720 Moebius. You hope. You will also be able to use the Alt key to perform board grabs and the like while airborne.

Visually, so far *Supreme Snowboarding* is an absolute treat. There are variable weather conditions, such as snow and fog, and real-time volumetric lighting (and shade) effects that change depending on the time of the day. Each of the six different characters are based on skeletal animation techniques, with multiple texture maps – up to 2,300 polygons apiece and ‘skinned’ so there are no joints between the polygons. There’s also one character who’s the spitting image of Keith ‘Prodigy’ Flint’s dad, which takes some getting used to...

But over and above the comprehensive set of game modes and pretty visuals, Housemarque is betting: Supreme Snowboarding has a number of features which board fans will be unable to resist. Firstly, there's the game's tessellated landscape engine (no polygon-defined slopes here) which enables the game to scale the level of detail according to the processing power of each player's PC. More importantly though, you're not restricted to racing or crouching around the fixed set of tracks — the whole damn mountain has been modelled for you (a given level might be around 4,000,000 square metres, and you can't get more off-piste than that). How you get from A to B is very much dependent on how adventurous you are or how poor your sense of direction is.

And finally there's pain, and sharing pain with friends. As snowboarders themselves, the devel-

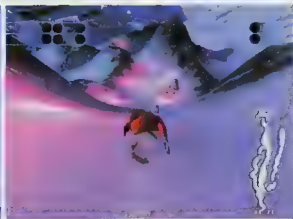
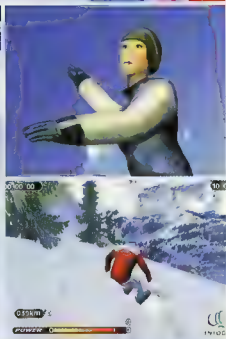


opment team has recognised that half the appeal of the real thing is wiping out in progressively more stupid and spectacular ways, and they're building that 'that's gotta hurt' feeling into the character animations for single-player and, most tempting of all, the eight-player LAN and Internet race events.

THE PITCH: Simply the best PC snowboarding simulation ever. Realistic, atmospheric and totally in yer face

THE PROSPECTS: Being the best on the PC won't take much. On current form, this game might even make you want to go out and board for real.

DUE: November



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HALO

GENRE: Action LABEL: Bungie DEVELOPER: Bungie

Halo's indoor environments are spectacular. Coloured lighting pours in through stained glass windows, computer displays reflect off polished floors. The buildings' curved surfaces and seamless textures eradicate any semblance of the Lego-style architecture we've grown accustomed to in 90-degree-heavy 3D games. And when you step outside... smooth, rolling green hills dominate the landscape, interspersed with cliff-walled canyons in the nadirs of watersheds. Trees sway in the breeze. A waterfall plunges into a sparkling river. You can't make out a straight line anywhere, and the lush scenery seems to go on for miles.

Halo challenges the current conception of how beautiful a computer game can be. It could, in fact, redefine your conception of computer games. Why? Because this third-person-perspective action game features the finest 3D-game engine, character animation, and physics modelling we've ever seen.

Not satisfied with simply stunning terrain, Jason Jones – creator of Marathon and Myth and the visionary and lead programmer for Halo – also aims to revolutionise the art of character animation and physics modelling. Not only do vehicles and characters reflect light and cast dynamic shadows, they actually appear iridescent. Even more impressive is the life-like way in which the models move.

In almost every game you've played before, the character animations are pre-canned, that is,

animated before you ever play the game. What you see when you walk forward or jump is actually a series of slightly different models, rapidly painted – one after another – much like a three-dimensional flip book. Not so in Halo. Jones found a way to implement inverse kinematics, a technique for modelling human motion, in real-time. Game models actually have a skeleton inside them with properties governing the movement of each joint. If your character is riding in a jeep and the driver hits the brakes, the inertia jolts his skeleton forward in the seat, moving the character right along with it. At the same time, his arm could be reacting naturally to the recoil of his pistol, and his head could be turning to track an enemy. This kind of dynamic, fluid movement and attention to detail is unheralded on many levels.

And then there are the vehicles themselves. Driving around in the game's jeep could practically qualify as a game in itself, due to the extremely detailed physics model (think Grand Prix Legends, off-road). The vehicles' tyres kick up pebbles and dust that change colour depending on the terrain you're driving over. Bungie also displayed an iridescent flying vehicle and hover tank that were equally impressive.



As one final demonstration of the engine's power, Jones zoomed the map out so that the marine appeared as just a speck in the distance. Then he smoothly zoomed in, close enough to read an indicator on the side of the soldier's rifle that showed how much ammo remained.

The standard soldier's weapons are a pistol with a built-in laser for painting targets, an assault rifle with an attached grenade launcher, and a machete for desperate situations. We also saw a zooming sniper rifle, that rocket launcher that leaves realistic smoke trails that dissipate into the wind, a surface-to-air missile, a spear gun, and a funky looking defoliator weapon. The aliens pretty much have an equivalent weapon for each purpose, but they shoot blue energy beams instead of familiar, earthly ordinance.

Bungie's game design process is three-fold. Firstly it finishes its engine, then it tests the multiplayer game, and finally moves on to the



single-player experience. Since the game recently began moving into phase two, much of the game's story has yet to be realised. However, the Halo engine is so amazing that Bungie could simply let us run around the map banging two rocks together, and that would still entertain us for a while.

The setup for the game goes something like this. A space-faring transport vessel carrying about 1,800 humans, 800 of them marines, crash-lands on a huge ring-world that orbits a distant star. A theoretically feasible sci-fi construct, a ring-world is a thin ring of planetary mass thousands of miles across, with

TOP 10 NOW PLAYING

Here are the Top 10 titles that you're all playing on your PCs at the moment – at least so you tell us! If your current favourite isn't here, then turn to page 134 to find out how to tell us

Playlist position	Title	Label	Game type
1	Half-Life	Sierra	Action
2	Hidden & Dangerous	Talorsoft	Action
3	Kingpin: Life Of Crime	Interplay	Action
4	Aliens Versus Predator	Fox Interactive	Action
5	C&C Tiberian Sun	Westwood	Strat/War
6	Star Wars Episode I: Racer	LucasArts	Action
7	SimCity 3000	Maxis	Strat/War
8	RollerCoaster Tycoon	MicroProse	Strat/War
9	Outcast	Infogrames	Adv/RPG
10	Official Formula 1 Racing	Elidos	Simulation



an inner surface coated with desirable life-supporting essences such as an atmosphere, soil, trees, and water. Because of the ring-world's unique halo orbit at the Lagrange Point between a gas giant and one of its moons, this freakish world actually spins in place, with the resultant inertia creating an effect similar to gravity (remember the space station in 2001: A Space Odyssey).

An impressive artifact of tremendous significance, the ring appears to have been mysteriously abandoned by the time your ship crash-lands on the surface. But, much like a leftover slice of pizza at the PC Gaming World offices, this kind of phenomenon fails to go unnoticed for long.

An alien race called the Covenant soon pops up. Technologically supe-

rior to humans, these humanoids show up in great numbers to pilfer what they can from the ring. As you might guess, a full-scale war erupts between the humans and the Covenant.

Since the humans are ill-equipped to face the Covenant head on, their only hope is to use guerrilla tactics. Given this fact, at times you'll be able to use all the alien's weapons and vehicles against them. The other big problem you'll face in the early parts of the game is that all your mates and gear gets spread out over the ringworld in the chaos that precedes the crash.

Halo makes quite an impression the first time around, but it isn't exactly a surprise that something so revolutionary would come from Bungie. After all, it's known for being

different. It does its own publishing, it has always supported the Mac platform, and it tends to make fewer and more innovative games than the rest of the pack.

Although only in the nascent stages of development, it's readily apparent that Halo is very big news.

Jason Jones, Bungie programmer: "There's a common saying among programmers, 'Don't try and reinvent the wheel.' Well, we try and reinvent the wheel because hey, the guy who invented the wheel was really psyched. We typically throw away all our code when we start a new project. I am much more likely to start from scratch. If you don't understand what you're doing at the most basic level, you'll never be able to innovate.

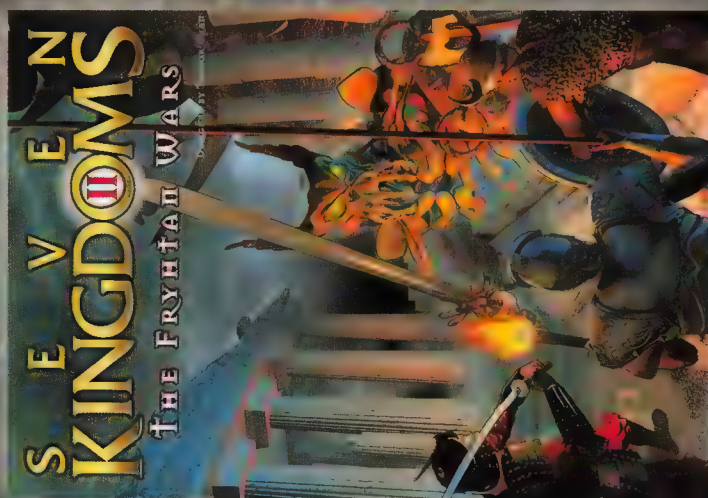
"Ever since Quake came out,

similar first-person shooters were all over the place. You could hardly tell them apart. You won't be able to mistake Halo for anything else. The reason that we do this is because, just like users who get bored of recycled ideas, we get bored the same way. We didn't want to do another first-person shooter or another real-time strategy game. We're also not really big on analysing the market or saying that game x is really cool. We do what we think is cool because we love it."

THE PITCH: Quite the most astounding 3D game in development

THE PROSPECTS: If the gameplay is as amazing as the technology, this is going to be absolutely massive

DATE: Spring 2000





Aristo tries to succeed with a simple plan: a Global Party

"Aristo International designs and develops location-based, pay-per-play, amusement games and products."

is that

sic

fun has been lost as of late in the arcade industry.

According to Dave Albert, vice president of Aristo:

"Aristo is about bringing people together. Too many people are into

several products coming. Besides upcoming football and hockey games, there is a tabletop version of "Pong," with up to eight players (called TeamNet, picture below). They also plan to launch Playnet for music and TouchNet which through ISDN lines will bring the net to bar locations for more!

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learned the high-speed polygon

least bought the equipment from a company that knew how). At the AMOA,

there were a plethora of driving sims, most of which were mentioned earlier: Cruis'n The World, San Francisco Rush and more. Sega's newest installment was called Sega's Touring Car. A strange game in a few ways: First, it feels quite a bit like Sega's



Age feel of the car is not 100 percent, but these

companies are nowhere near as established as Sega and Namco in the driving field. Perhaps this is a trend starting; the big guys lead the way and others will follow (ahem, Street Fighter).

Cobra Performance:

1 to 5 million polygon/sec
50 to 250 million pixels/sec

Resolution:

640 x 400 to 1,280 x 1,024 pixels
144 Bits/pixel frame buffer
256 level alpha blending

Shading:

Subpixel sampling
antialiasing
Flat shading
Gouraud shading

Lighting:

Linear fog
Exponential Fog



Board has support 1 million polygons, where the Cobra is just being learned to program on and it reaches more than 1 million—first try!





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GP500

GENRE: Simulation LABEL: MicroProse DEVELOPER: Melbourne House

Fast bikes and rollicking rock music is a sure-fire way to attract the chicks, I've been told. And the bikes don't come much faster than the race bred GP500 class, where manufacturers strain at the leash to squeeze massive bhp out of engines 30 per cent smaller than those used in Superbikes. GP500s are even lighter and loopier than Superbikes and make for probably the most entertaining races to watch. The rider names involved are as legendary as the Slight's and Foggys of Superbikes, too – many have ridden both: Max Biaggi, Mick Doohan and John Kocinski.

Not quite all the teams in the real Dorna series appear to be here at the moment, but the biggest and best known, like Repsol Honda, Movistar and Red Bull Yamaha, are all represented. All 14 tracks in the circuit are present including the torturous Suzuka Grand Prix, the British Grand Prix at Donington, the Gran Premio de Espana at Jerez and the Gran Premio Cirio Citta di Imola. Modes include single race, championship and time trial, and the bikes can be set to arcade or simulation.

This is one of the more difficult bike simulations I've played, even with rider assistance for braking, and I seemed to spend most of the time on my rear end. It's only when you get to the stage where you can follow other riders around the tracks, mimicking their actions, that you actually get used to playing properly. Whether the

difficulty level will be set this high in the finished version isn't clear, but as it is these bikes seem to have very little grip or brakes. Sparks fly from the bike as it skids along the ground and your rider doesn't look too happy. Clouds of sand fly out from your back wheel in the sand pits and dust rises from grassy areas as you attempt to get out of the rough. You do get a big cheer when you fall off, though.

With rider aids turned on there is a red stop sign that tells you when you're going too fast for a particular stage of the circuit. This fades as you approach more realistic speeds. There's also a skid icon which appears when you're about to lose the back wheel. The trick of winning appears to be keeping just at the edge of these icons' effects.

As usual with bike games, GP500 can be viewed from behind the biker or over-the-handlebars. The latter is intuitive to play in, something which is helped by the detail changes in the rider's viewpoint: the right hand is throttle on and off, the handlebars move independently of the fairing and the rider backs off and leans forward and sideways convincingly. When you fall off the bike it's very disorienting too, though no bruising is involved (unless you inadvertently drop your joystick on your big toe).

The tracks represented are reason-



ably high in detail, and of course, the higher the resolution your 3D card and PC spec will allow, the better they look. Using a Voodoo2 card 800x600 was fine when we tested.

GP500 is a slightly different take on the motorbike scene that lets you race on an interesting set of the world's greatest Grand Prix circuits.

THE PITCH: Become Simon Crafar on the unsteady saddle of a 500cc mean machine

THE PROSPECTS: Bike sims have gained credibility – EA's Superbike World Championship sold well – and MicroProse is well known for its sims quality

DUE: October

DECEMBER



STARFLEET COMMAND

2000



HALO

Alone in the Dark 4
Mighty English
Babylon 5: Space
Combat Simulator
Halo: The Master Chief
Blade & Whistle
Blade
The Death Race
Freelancer
Civilization III

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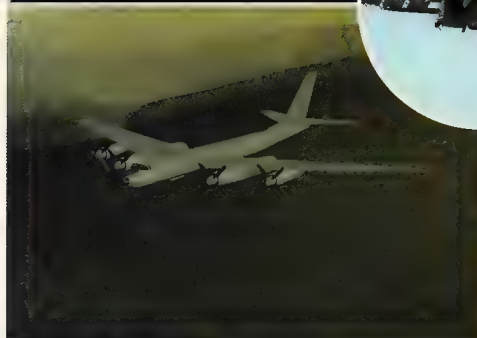
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F/A-18E SUPER HORNET

GENRE: Simulation LABEL: Titus DEVELOPER: Digital Integration

New Digital Integration sims are more common than solar eclipses, but not by much. Even by Digital's usual standards, this game has had an unusually long gestation period. Some two years after F-16 Fighting Falcon left the nest, the maker of Tornado, Hind and Apache Longbow is finally ready to unveil its interpretation of the US Navy's newest front-line fighter.

Super Hornet purports to model carrier ops more authentically than ever. Preparing for my first cat shot, it was easy to see why. Animated deck crew direct you into position frantically waggling fluorescent batons, while steam wafts across the deck as aircraft launch from other catapults. Always a stickler for realism, Digital has really pushed hard to ensure that

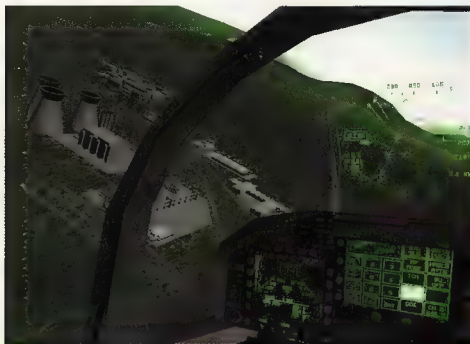
every gadget works exactly as advertised. A clever mouse-operated system allows you to pan around the 'office' and zoom-in on any one of the fully active panels with a simple click. As for the flight model, some manic manoeuvring demonstrated the excellent feel and thoroughly believable reactions. You can even adjust the twin throttles individually, allowing for some flashy asymmetric after-burner juggling.

Landing is one of the biggest challenges facing the naval aviator and as you'd expect, it's covered in minute detail. A fully functioning Fresnel landing light system will be complemented by the virtual Landing Signals Officer (LSO) who will do his very best to talk you down on to the pitching deck.



The game is set in two generously-sized combat zones covering some 40,000 square miles of satellite-derived scenery. Some radical Ruskies need sorting out in the Barents Sea, while an Indian invasion of Sri Lanka must be repulsed in the Indian Ocean. Forty missions

will be included, pitting you and your intelligent wingmen against a variety of land, sea and air assets from potent MiG-29 Fulcrums to lumbering Tu-95 Bear bombers. Deep strikes, air-to-air intercepts and close air support will be just a few of the operational missions in which to



unleash the Hornet's awesome arsenal. As well as the usual AMRAAM's Mavericks and dumb bombs, the game models the very latest super-smart systems including the AGM-84E SLAM (Stand-off Land Attack Missile). Players will even be able to guide this devastat-

ing bit of kit manually, using one of the cockpit's Multi Function Displays.

Visually, the emphasis seems to be on reality rather than eye candy. But clever use of micro-texturing provides an excellent sensation of speed at low level, especially when viewed from one of several third-person perspectives.

Super Hornet looks like it will have the credentials to challenge the opposition in a turning fight. Only the last-minute decision to omit the promised dynamic campaign system could potentially spoil the fun.

THE PITCH: The most realistic Hornet sim ever

THE PROSPECTS: A serious sim for the serious simmer. Digital can expect much grumbling about the lack of dynamic campaigns

DUE: Late October

motocross accident...
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"should've played
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SIERRA



FAUST

GENRE: Adventure & Roleplaying **LABEL:** Cryo **DEVELOPER:** Arxel Tribe

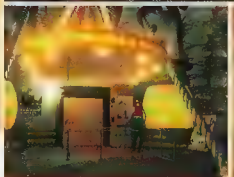
Marcellus Faust, a wise old soul from Mississippi, is the last keeper of an abandoned amusement park known as Dreamland. This isn't just any old amusement park, though, but a realm which stands between heaven and hell, and home to the souls of seven sinners.

One night a special visitor comes to bargain for those souls – he's none other than Mephistopheles, the devil. He delights in manipulating and tempting mere mortals, and believes these souls are rightfully his. But Marcellus is a good man, and believes that the souls can be saved. To do so, he must take it upon himself to journey back in time and witness the lives of the unfortunates, and investigate the mysteries that surround the park itself. Ultimately, he must do battle with Mephisto for the ultimate prize: his own soul.

Faust is the new adventure from

Arxel Tribe, creator of the much underrated Wagnerian epic Ring. It has a similar graphical style – elaborately rendered scenery, and even more elaborately rendered characters, modelled and animated using sculptures which have been scanned in 3D and then brought to life using motion capture. Visually, Faust is very striking – more so even than Riven. The intricate textures, the amazing skies and vivid colours make it seem larger than life, while the derelict rides and sideshows create an atmosphere at once melancholy and menacing.

The game is split into seven chapters, each concerning one of the



souls whose fate lies in your hands. The game is definitely geared towards an adult audience – Cryo is pitching for a 15 rating – since the stories are somewhat macabre, and even horrifying in places. There's a sex scene between one character and a phantom woman, there's violence elsewhere, and the characters include a pair of Siamese twins, a disturbingly obese woman and a midget, among others.

During each chapter, you will be free to explore everything you see, and will need to complete sections

of the game that include shooting, interactive rides, animal taming and games of poker. After each section is completed, you'll gain access to a new area of the park and all its attractions, and you'll be able to replay movie sequences and soundtracks at your leisure. There's around 40 minutes of movie quality animation, and watching it is one of the game's chief attractions.

THE PITCH: A thought-provoking and captivating adventure based on the Faust legend

THE PROSPECTS: Weird and lavishly produced new adventure – and you don't get many of them these days

DUE: October

8 HOURS BEHIND

America is another country. Strange stuff happens there. And some quite important stuff, too. To keep you in the loop – here's the view from 8 Hours Behind

All quoted from our US sister publication Computer Gaming World

JOHNNY WILSON ON LEAVING CGW FOR PASTURES NEW "I've been writing for Computer Gaming World for more than 17 years. I've done everything from pasting address labels on envelopes, manually entering Top 100 data into a spreadsheet, and cleaning toilets to speaking around the world at conferences, on television and radio on behalf of CGW and computer entertainment."

READER LETTER "In your August issue, you represented a five star rating with a Three Musketeers bar, and a four star rating with a Snickers. How can you possibly prefer the limp and overall boring flavour of the former with the hardy nuttiness of the latter? I know when I need a chocolate fix, nothing satisfies like a Snickers. No, I don't work for Snickers; I'm simply a concerned reader who feels it is his duty to point out the grave lack of taste on the part of the individuals responsible for that section. For shame!"

THEME PARK WORLD "Testing your coaster is definitely the coolest aspect of Theme Park World, because you can get into the car and ride the coaster in a nauseating first-person, watching the world spin on a coaster corker... It was all in my head, of course, but I swear I could feel my stomach torque as I hit the bottom of a large coaster dip."

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE "Even I was shocked the first time I saw a shot that severed an enemy's leg at the thigh, and could actually see the shattered bone stump sticking out."

SPEC OPS II: GREEN BEREFS "The simulated men do train and fight like the real Green Berets, with obstacle courses modeled."

KINGPIN "...the handful of animated cut scenes intended to stitch the game's sections together sound like a David Mamet play as performed by someone with Tourette's Syndrome."

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 1999 "While crisp and clean, the distinctive graphics are too cartoony. Golfers are little more than animated mannequins, devoid of any facial features. Is that Tom Lehman or an extra from Pink Floyd's The Wall? Only Sierra knows for sure."

JEFF GREEN ON MEETING A LEGEND "I traveled to the home of legendary game designer Sid Meier for my exclusive hands-on world premiere scoop of the new Civilization game. Unfortunately, as it turns out, I wrote the address down incorrectly, and when I knocked on the door of what I thought was Sid's house – located under a freeway, with a dismembered tractor on the front lawn – a very scary looking man in a blood stained undershirt pointed his shotgun and Rottweiler at me and asked me to get off his property."



INTERSTATE 82

GENRE: Action LABEL: In house DEVELOPER: In-house

Activision had a surprise hit on its hands with its 70s inspired combat driving game, Interstate 82. And not being one to waste an opportunity, here comes the sequel. If Interstate 76 owed much to the Dukes of Hazard for its style, Interstate 82 is more Miami Vice. Gone are the flares, sideburns and afros, and in are the wet-look curly perms, pastel linen suits and blacker-than-black sunglasses.

Based on the new hardware only Heavy Gear II game engine, Interstate 82 is a slicker game than its rough hewn predecessor. Expect to see indoor and outdoor sections with a great deal more graphical detail than last time; effects such as fog, reflective water, lightning and rain; realistic physics which affect car handling, weapons and damage, and a multiplayer option that allows anyone to join at anytime.

Interstate 76 was essentially a revenge story. You played vigilante Groove Champion who, aided by his buddy Taurus, set out to avenge the death of his sister, Jade. Six years have passed since then and things have changed, including the protagonist. Groove is missing, and now, as Taurus, you must find him before the

mob does. Your new sidekick is Groove's younger sister, Sky, whose bizarre Thompson Twins hairdo, motorbike and no-nonsense attitude would be enough to discourage any lustful thoughts.

The story develops into a conspiracy involving the government, assassination plots and South American revolutionaries, and with each new mission comes a juicy bit of scene setting FMV.

You'll also find yourself chasing bad guys in places as diverse as Las Vegas, sewers, a shopping mall and a secret military base known as Area 49. Naturally, being the 80s you'll have a new selection of cars to play with, from gas guzzling sports models to the humble British mini, the occasional motorbike and even a helicopter. You'll be able to get out of your car, though this makes you vulnerable, and car-jack other vehicles.

THE PITCH: All the fun of Interstate 76 but with a new, fast, luscious game engine

THE PROSPECTS: Much slicker than its predecessor, but the proof will be in the playing

OUT: November 1999

TRANSATLANTIC TOP 10

Here's the latest PC games chart from the US – official US chart data from PC Data

	Title	Genre	Label
1	Rainbow Six Gold	Strat/War	Red Storm
2	MP Roller Coaster Tycoon	Strat/War	MicroProse
3	StarCraft	Strat/War	Blizzard
4	SimCity 3000	Strat/War	Maxis
5	Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2	Sports	Activision
6	Half-Life	Action	Sierra
7	Hoyle Casino 99	Clas/Puz/Kids	Sierra
8	Star Trek: Starfleet Command	Strat/War	Interplay
9	Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit	Action	Electronic Arts
10	Monopoly	Clas/Puz/Kids	Hasbro

YOUR TEAM HAS BEEN
DROPPED DEEP BEHIND
ENEMY LINES ON A
MERCENARY CONTRACT JOB...
YOU'VE SUFFERED
HORRENDOUS LOSSES...
YOU'VE RETREATED TO
THE PICK-UP POINT...
BUT THERE'S NO CHOPPER,
AND A MESSAGE STATING -
"YOUR UNIT HAS BEEN DELETED"
YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.

...IT'S PAYBACK TIME!

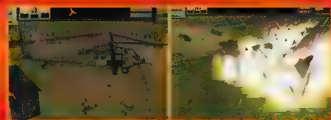
Shadow



- The game is **entirely in 3D**, with **high quality graphics**.
A very detailed terrain, the great sound environment and the character animations make the experience immersive, close to **watching a movie**.
- Determine **your own strategy**: there is no set way to accomplish each mission, that's left for you to decide. Go in with guns blazing or carefully pick the guards one by one?
- Take control of **up to twelve mercs at a time**, each with their own weapon preferences and **detailed skills**, but also personality and background.
- Intuitive gameplay** allows to easily perform **spectacular feats**: creep up behind guards unnoticed, ambush patrols and generally wreak unseen havoc upon your enemies.
- 9 vast campaigning areas**, each with multiple objectives for **dozens of realistic missions** overall.
- The team has a **wide array of weapons and equipment** to help them in their tasks, such as assault rifles, sniping rifles, explosives, tools, etc.

COMPANY

LEFT FOR DEAD



UNLEASHED SEPTEMBER 1999

Ubi Soft web site: www.ubisoft.co.uk



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CODENAME EAGLE

GENRE: Strategy & Wargaming **LABEL:** Take 2 Interactive
DEVELOPER: Refraction Games

Biggles had it easy compared with Agent Red of Shadow Command. For the plucky ace could rely on solid chums like Bertie, Algy and Ginger to see him through scrapes with arch enemy Eric Von Stalhein. Red, however, is very much on his own in this subtle first-person shooter, as all his pals do is drop him deep in the unpleasant stuff.

Espionage and stealth are very much part of the game as Red, clad in leather flying helmet and one of those fleecy-collared flying jackets that only tough aviators can get away with, wreaks havoc behind enemy lines. And who is the enemy? Why Russia, naturally, but not the sinis-

ter Soviet regime agents the West usually has to tackle. Instead it's the totalitarian Tsarist regime of a Russia where the Revolution and the First World War as we know it never happened.

The old Tsar is dead, killed by the hands of his own son, the impatient, warmongering Peter. The young ruler, however, isn't one to let the industrial might of his country be wasted on producing ploughshares when it can be used to further his ambitions. So instead, tanks, artillery and munitions roll off the production line, and Europe is embroiled in a war against the Tsar – a war in which it struggles.

Enter the dirty tricks department

in the shape of Shadow Command, and its top operative, Red. His 12 missions involve infiltrating enemy positions, seeking out secret papers and sabotaging military installations. As well as sneaking along on foot, it's possible to drive vehicles such as lorries, motorcycles and, in the first mission, a rather cool armoured car with twin machine-guns. Action also takes place up in the air, with Red required to make his escape in one mission by stealing a plane from an airbase and in another, flying an

authentic-looking SE5a to staff a goods train.

All the action takes place in a 3D-accelerated environment that makes use of D3D. Weather and time have an effect, with missions taking place in driving snow and at night. Red even leaves footprints in the snow, though they fade after a few seconds.

Atmospheric graphics serve to enhance the early 20th century feel of the game, as do the limited weapons of knife, revolver, sniper rifle, stick grenade and machine-gun.

With its emphasis on stealth and knife-work – go in guns blazing and all you'll do is wake up every darned sentry on the base – Codename Eagle looks like requiring thought as well as marksmanship to complete. Which could make all the difference to gamers who like a considerable tactical element to their action games.

THE PITCH: Nail-biting espionage action against the Russkies on an alternative Earth

THE PROSPECTS: Chocks away, chaps. This is in the same mould as *Hidden & Dangerous* and could take off

DATE: October

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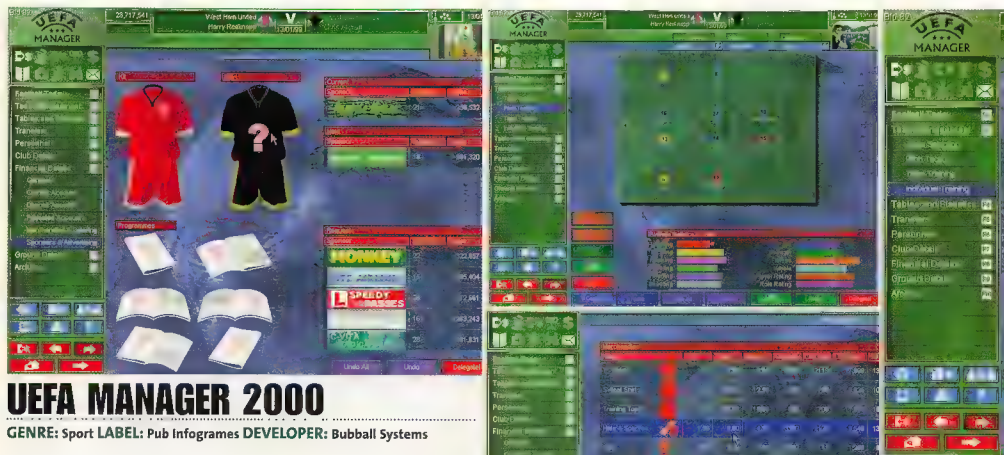
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UEFA MANAGER 2000

GENRE: Sport LABEL: Pub Infogrames DEVELOPER: Bubball Systems

Ballsy, you might say. It's your first full-blown commercial title after a few conversions and some demo work, and you decide to take on the entrenched might of Championship Manager 3 and other established football management simulations such as Infogrames' own Premier Manager.

Naturally in such a competitive field, it won't be enough to make 'just another good football manager'. With UEFA Manager 2000, UK developer Bubball Systems will have to offer the sort of depth the hardcore fan is after, plus a host of new and interesting angles.

The official UEFA tag is the first and most obvious clue to what will be on offer when the game releases in November. Once you select your team from more than 500 from nine countries (with between two and five divisions each) and recruit your players from the database of over 20,000 'real' players worldwide, the challenge will be to lead your squad from domestic league success to European cup victory – with all the UEFA competition formats available. There's also the intriguing prospect of many scenario games where you take on a given task – avoiding the drop with a particular team and zero finance, that sort of thing.

You may have noticed, we put 'real' players in quotes in the previous

paragraph. It's a sticky subject. The UEFA licence does not give the right to use proper player names. Many or most players and managers probably won't give two hoots about appearing in a football game – some in fact would probably be rather chuffed – so it's possible for a games developer to take a chance and use its name regardless. It's happened before. But the chance of an unpleasantly expensive lawsuit is very real, particularly where the player name is used in conjunction with the correct shirt (effectively a trademarked product) and where rival publishers are paying for specific rights (EA with FIFA and FA Premier League Stars, for example). Yet, like most of us, Bubball hates the idea of using silly variations on well-known names so the most likely outcome will be correct surnames matched to incorrect first initials and shirt numbers. Editable, of course.

Funnily enough, you can't avoid stats in a football management game. They get everywhere, and we love them. But UEFA Manager 2000 aims to be a lot more intuitive than most. Thus team formations and the like will all use a simple but flexible drag 'n' drop interface for choosing marking



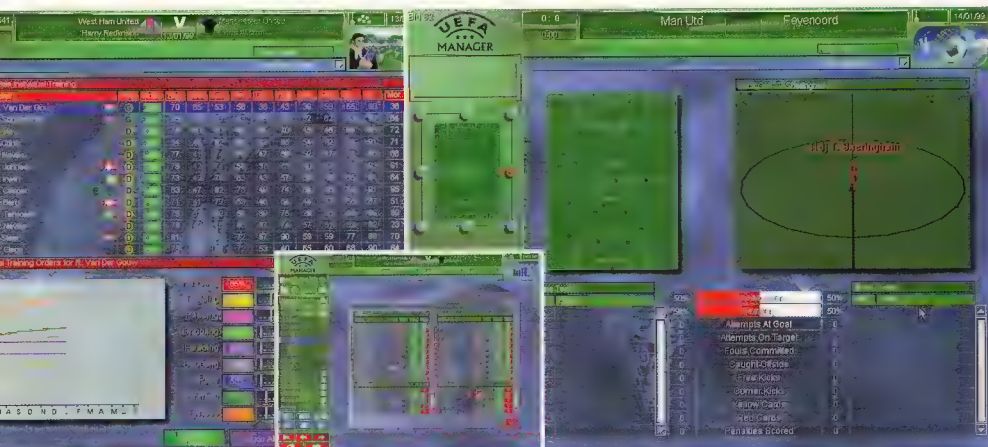
systems, set plays, movement on and off the ball and so forth. Similarly the game takes every opportunity to remove an arbitrary number and replace it with a phrase (such as 'good ball skills and weak tackling'). The numbers are all there when you need to delve into charts and tables – and incidentally player profile statistics are derived from the Carling Opta ratings system – but wherever possible they are kept in the background. Another nice touch is the 'Football Today' tab which gives you a handy prompter for the tasks that need your attention on a daily basis.

The game also hopes to extend the scope traditionally offered in football management games, trying to give the player control over every influential or troublesome aspect of a football manager's life (up to and notwithstanding Stan Collymore). You will also find that the slant is very player-centric. For example no matter how well you train a player, if he happens to be an older striker wor-

ried by the arrival of a younger rival his morale and performance will drop unless you deal with the situation.

On the coaching front there is an in-depth staff structure to help you in the day-to-day duties (assistant manager, trainers, scouts, accountants, doctors) while you develop a full training system and a youth development programme. There will also be a comprehensive financial aspect to the game, covering everything from development in and around the ground, ticket prices, merchandise, catering, sponsorship and advertising, and a detailed transfer model. The latter uses the Bosman rules and includes numerous contract clauses and bonus schemes.

Finally, there's the match engine itself. Bubball is placing a lot of emphasis on the fact that this is an AI-based simulation where matches happen and are not pre-calculated, and there are no scripted sequences. Thus you will be able to watch the results minute-by-minute in real time, make tactical changes during the course of the game and see your



CHART

The PC Gaming World Charts are compiled from official weekly sales data gathered by ChartTrack/ELSPA

TOP 40 FULL PRICE GAMES

Week	Title	Publisher	Weeks on chart	Highest position
1	NE	Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun/Westwood	2	1
2	(1)	Championship Manager 3/Eidos	24	1
3	(3)	Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace/LucasArts	14	1
4	(4)	Hidden & Dangerous 2/Talossoft	10	2
5	(4)	Kingpin: Life Of Crime/Interplay	10	2
6	(8)	RollerCoaster Tycoon/MicroProse	26	1
7	(5)	Aliens Versus Predator/Fox Interactive	10	1
8	(7)	Star Wars Episode 1: Racer/LucasArts	13	4
9	(10)	Half-Life/Sierra	41	2
10	NE	The FA Premier League Stars/EA Sports	4	2
11	NE	Civilization II: Test Of Time/MicroProse	4	6
12	(6)	Dungeon Keeper II/B3: ifrog	11	2
13	NE	Delta Force/Novologic	28	2
14	(26)	Monopoly/Hasbro	122	10
15	(7)	Flight Simulator 98/Microsoft	98	1
16	(27)	Worms Armageddon/MicroProse	31	4
17	(15)	SimCity 3000/Maxis	31	1
18	(12)	Star Trek: Birth Of The Federation/MicroProse	15	1
19	(22)	Midtown Madness II/Microsoft	14	8
20	(23)	Grand Theft Auto/Take 2	91	2
21	(6)	International Cricket Captain 2/Empire	7	6
22	RE	Theif: The Dark Project/Eidos	18	12
23	(26)	MechWarrior III/MicroProse	13	4
24	(32)	Combat Flight Simulator 2/Microsoft	40	1
25	RE	Falcon 4.0/MicroProse	25	1
26	RE	The Settlers II/Blue Byte	4	2
27	(16)	Official Formula 1 Racing/Eidos	15	3
28	(34)	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six/Eidos	40	1
29	(28)	TOCA 2 Touring Cars/Codemasters	23	3
30	(11)	Braveheart/Eidos	7	8
31	(32)	Baldur's Gate/Interplay	34	1
32	(39)	South Park/Activision	17	5
33	RE	Cuando II/Hasbro	7	19
34	RE	Superbowl World Championship/EA Sports	18	2
35	(19)	Discworld Noir/CT Interactive	9	11
36	NE	Fizz Lightning 3/Novologic	2	27
37	RE	Jimmy White's 2: Cuebal/Virgin	14	5
38	RE	Populous: The Beginning/B3: ifrog	23	3
39	(37)	HFA 99/EA Sports	39	2
40	(40)	Civilization: Call To Power/Activision	22	2

BUDGET/RE-RELEASES TOP 15

1	Worms	Sold Out
2	Atom c Bomberman	Sold Out
3	Championship Manager 2	Sold Out
4	Tom Clancy's The Cold Menace	Premier Collectors
5	Theme Hospital	EA Classics
6	Broken Sword	Sold Out
7	Theme Park	EA Classics
8	Lego Island	Sold Out
9	Cannon Fodder	Sold Out
10	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Gold	Red Storm
11	Age Of Empires Gold	Microsoft
12	Conan 1999 Edition	Microsoft
13	WarCraft	Sold Out
14	Commandos: Beyond The Call Of Duty	Eidos
15	Worms 2	Hasbro Classic
SIMULATION TOP 3		
1	Flight Simulator '98	Microsoft
2	MechWarrior III	MicroProse
3	Combat Flight Simulator	Microsoft
ACTION TOP 3		
1	Hidden & Dangerous	Talossoft
2	Kingpin: Life Of Crime	Interplay
3	Aliens Versus Predator	Fox Interactive
STRATEGY & WARGAMING TOP 3		
1	Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun	Westwood
2	RollerCoaster Tycoon	MicroProse
3	Civilization II: Test Of Time	MicroProse
SPORTS TOP 3		
1	Championship Manager 3	Eidos
2	The FA Premier League Stars	EA Sports
3	International Cricket Captain 2	Empire
ADVENTURE & ROLEPLAYING TOP 3		
1	Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace	LucasArts
2	Bad Guy's Gate	Interplay
3	D'sworld Noir	GT Interactive
MULTIMEDIA TOP 5		
1	The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield	Fox Interactive
2	Age Route Express GB 2000	Microsoft
3	IBM Via Voice 98 Home	IBM
4	Dance Baby 2	Fast Trak
5	Encarta 99 Suite	Microsoft

team carving out a result in full-screen or small-windowed 3D (the engine is both software and 3D hardware compatible and uses player animations based on Ronaldo V-Football motion captures).

Until we can sit down and waste through a few full seasons, it's impossible to make a call on this kind of game. Right now it's pretty much feature complete and heading for two months of the twilight zone that is QA testing. But, from what we can see, UEFA Manager 2000 has a tasty official endorsement, plenty of depth and detail in the conventional aspects of football management, and enough new features and interesting twists to make it a very credible contender.

THE PITCH: More of every aspect of management, realtime matches and an easy feel to it

THE PROSPECTS: Needs to be something special to shift people away from their favourites. But if it's as intuitive as it claims and the player-centric gameplay works, then it might just be that special

DOE: November



PANZER GENERAL 3D ASSAULT

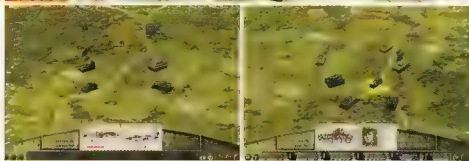
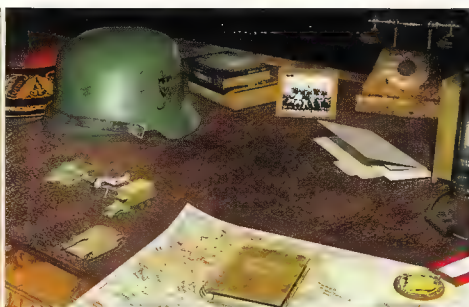
GENRE: Strategy & Wargaming LABEL:SSI DEVELOPER: In-house

SSI will tell you that its latest version of its top-selling wargame title, Panzer General, is more realistic because it's in 3D. That's bunkum: Panzer General 3D Assault is as gloriously unrealistic as all its predecessors, and thank goodness for that. Trying to make Panzer General realistic would have destroyed the essential fun of the series—it pretends to be a strategic game engine, when in fact it's a tactical one, and good and easy to get into.

Panzer General 3D Assault will be a beer and peanuts game, just like its

forebears, but its big advantage is that it looks a lot better. SSI's artists have outdone themselves: the painted maps they used in previous Panzer General games have gone 3D, which means that you can fly around the battlefield, zoom-in on terrain features, have a look at them from the other side, and get a much better feel of the landscape you're fighting over (and what sneaky enemy units might be hiding within). Plus, the new 3D system incorporates dynamic changes to the terrain—so you can set forests and cities on fire, bomb airfields flat and generally have great fun being destructive.

There's also a noticeable change to the way you command units. Instead of being assigned a core battle group consisting of various units which gradually get better as you win more battles, you get leaders. Your leaders can gain experience and special abilities and, although they

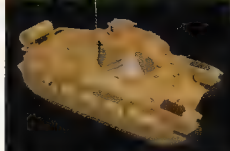


can be put in command of any type of unit, they'll do better if they're with air leaders with air units, tank leaders with armour and so on.

As they get better, they get promoted, and the higher the rank they go, the more orders they can give to their units during a turn. So a fast tank unit with a high-ranking leader may be able to move or attack three times during a turn. There's also lots more different orders you can give units—including entrench, which can be very useful.

This time there's a more realistic forces pool to choose from, with limitations on how many of particular types of unit you can have. In Panzer

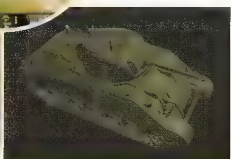
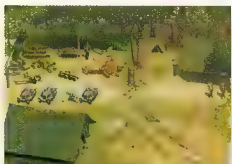
General 2, you tended to end a campaign with an army consisting of just heavy tanks and artillery, elite infantry and the best planes your points could buy. Now, you can't have



20 heavy tank units, because that's more than your factories would be able to build. So you'll just have to bulk up your forces with something a bit less all-powerful.

The downside to the Panzer General 2 system of unit command was that you could end up with a tough, experienced force that was totally unsuitable for a particular battle. With the new command system you can tailor-make your army to suit.

There will be eight different campaigns and a variety of single battles to choose from, making up more than 60 scenarios, and you can play as the British, Americans, Germans or French in the European Theatre and North Africa.



THE PITCH: Remember those little table-top tanks in Panzer General? Well they've all gone 3D—sort of

THE PROSPECTS: It'll be interesting to see if wargamers take to the 3D aspect

DATE: October

ARMORED FIST 3

GENRE: Simulation LABEL: NovaLogic DEVELOPER: In-house

Tanks are surely the ultimate boys' toy. Heavy, noisy, go anywhere, do anything vehicles equipped with a big gun. You might get cut up by Range Rovers and HGV drivers on the M1 in your Ford Escort, but let's see them take you on in a 60-tonne tank doing 50mph in the fast lane and eating petrol at five gallons to the mile. You could paint it pink, emblazon 'truck drivers are impotent' in giant lettering all over the turret and they still wouldn't try anything.

The M1 Abrams is the Mercedes Benz of the tank world. Superbly armoured, fleet of foot (or rather, track), and better equipped for death and destruction than any other piece of metal on the planet. Ask any Iraqi tank commander. Maybe the comparison with Mercedes is inappropriate, but it's worth pointing out that the M1 Abrams would make short work of concrete underpasses in Paris, too... As such it's been the subject of quite a few modern combat sims – most famously M1

Tank Platoon, but more frequently Armored Fist.

Armored Fist 3 is definitely at the more arcade end of the tank simulation genre, but that doesn't stop it from having some of the most accurate interior visuals ever seen. Although you can control the tank from an exterior viewpoint the real fun is taking over the various stations within the vehicle – driver, gunner and commander are all represented using images digitised from photos of the real thing. All the switches and monitors work, too. There are strange blacked-

out areas of the interior though, which are apparently top secret, presumably in case Fidel Castro ever picks up an M1 at a second-hand dealership and figures he can use Armored Fist 3 as a training sim.

When you're at the driver's position your gunner and commander will automatically acquire targets and take them out, and when you're at the gunner's position the driver will continue along the preset waypoints. The

best overall position will undoubtedly be the commander's where there are a wide array of sensors and controls. You are also able to take over the commander's external cupola mounted .50 calibre.

Missions are based all over the world, with training beginning in the States and then campaigns featuring, among other places, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Former USSR. There are solo missions and four complete campaigns, and you start off with just one tank and move on to eventually command up to three platoons of six tanks – and you can switch between vehicles at will, and set up and alter waypoints. Orders can also be issued regarding formation and movement.

This is the first we've seen of the new 32-bit version of NovaLogic's Voxel Space engine, and it certainly ups the ante in the graphics department. This is the same engine it will be using in Delta Force 2, which proves its versatility. Support for up to 30 tanks (possibly more in future) in an online multiplayer battle and NovaLogic's impressive Voice-Over-Net Internet communications should make it a hit with cooperative missions fans.

THE PITCH: More tank action with new graphics, four new campaigns and a host of support vehicles

THE PROSPECTS: It's a pretty game, but may prove too American for UK audiences. Multiplayer will undoubtedly be the best available, though

DATE: November





CLOSE COMBAT 4: BATTLE OF THE BULGE

GENRE: Strategy & Wargaming LABEL: SSI DEVELOPER: Atomic Software

The three titles in Microsoft's Close Combat real-time tactical wargame series sold more than 400,000 units in the past few years, and was one of the few (possibly the only) non shoot 'em-up series' to be regularly played on the PC Gaming World LAN. So you can imagine the shock that greeted Microsoft's decision to drop the franchise.

Luckily for strategy game lovers, developer Atomic Software has now hooked up with perhaps the best-known of all computer wargame publishers, SSI, and pretty soon we should be seeing the fourth in the Close Combat series, Battle Of The Bulge, hitting the shelves.

Atomic and SSI have also taken the opportunity to address the biggest complaint gamers had about Close Combat 3: The Russian Front – the way in which the Close Combat engine, essentially designed for small unit tactical combat, was clumsily

welded to a clunky 'strategic' system. True, you could refight the whole of the Eastern Front, from the initial German surprise attack on Russia – through the mincing machine of Stalingrad to the eventual fall of Berlin (or Moscow, depending on how well the Germans did) – but it never hung together particularly well.

This time, though, the strategic level has been woven in with the individual tactical battles much more closely. In Close Combat 4, movement on a strategic map representing the Ardennes determines where individual battles happen, and what forces either side can deploy. Each commander plots their moves on the strategic map, ordering up to two dozen battle groups to advance, defend or retreat: if you advance into a location held by the enemy, or if two opposing forces try to move into the same space, there's a battle. You can also attack the same

location from more than one adjacent space, with the resulting battles fought sequentially. So you can soften up a tough defence with a couple of probing attacks before trying for the knock-out blow.

You also have to manage your troops just as a real-life commander would: you can't magically cure all your battle groups in Close Combat 4, so when one of your forces takes a mauling, you've got to get it out of the front line and replace it with a fresh force. Holding key locations will have a direct effect on the availability of supplies and reinforcements, so you need to plan things properly.

SSI and Atomic have also added off-map artillery bombardments, air strikes, airborne drops, spies,



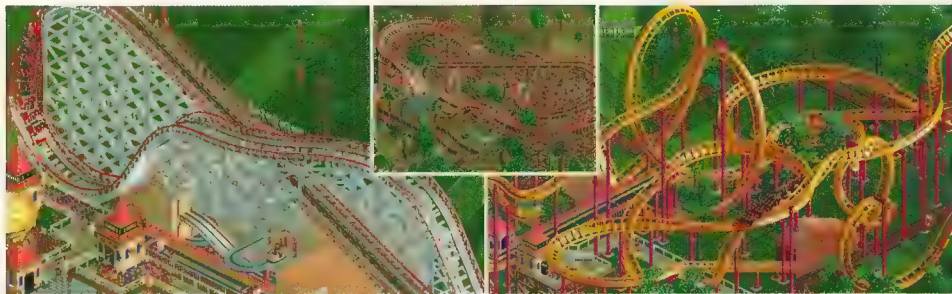
saboteurs (the infamous German Brandenburgers, who infiltrated Allied

lines in captured US vehicles and uniforms to wreak havoc) and big, big tanks. And the AI looks improved too, so that computer-controlled units will perform to the best of their ability, taking into account stress, fatigue and morale levels.

THE PITCH: More real-time battles in World War II, but not with Microsoft

THE PROSPECTS: The move to SSI may mean that wargamers take the game more seriously

DUE: November



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON: ADDED ATTRactions

GENRE: Strategy LABEL: Hasbro DEVELOPER: Chris Sawyer

RollerCoaster Tycoon is almost certainly the most colourful and addictive management sim this year, and it was no great surprise to see it go straight to number one in the charts.

But once you've completed all the scenarios a few times, what then? The answer is Added Attractions, a comprehensive add-on disc which includes 30 new scenarios and a selection of new rides, shops, scenery and themes.

According to designer Chris Sawyer, the philosophy of the pack is 'more of the same' rather than changing the game in any way – more rollercoasters, more rides, more scenery, more themes, more scenarios, more fun. And when he says more – he means it. The original game contained around 34,000 bitmapped graphics, while the expansion pack adds another 23,000. Many of the new features and rides can be constructed in the original scenarios, including saved games, but some rides are reserved for the new scenarios only, which bear names like Whispering Cliffs, Gentle Glen, Coaster Crazies, and the evocative Rotting Heights.

The main focus of the game is on the coasters themselves, and Sawyer has provided us with several new types to build. The first of these is the steel twister, a large and impressive ride that can be designed to feature large gauge loops, inline twists and steeply-banked turns, and comes with a choice of sit-

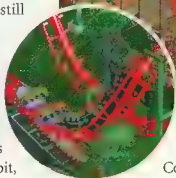
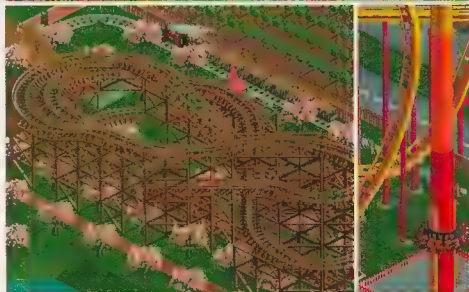
down or stand-up trains.

Another new design is the flying coaster, based on a prototype known as Stealth, which is due to debut in California next year. Here, riders lie suspended, face-down beneath the track, but twists can flip them over for a good look at the sky.

Not all the new additions are state of the art, mind you. The two new wooden designs hark back to an earlier age in coaster design and provide an interesting contrast to the flashier, modern rides. The first of these is the side friction coaster, which runs along a shallow trough aided by side-mounted wheels, rather than on rails. This design is so old that only two such coasters still exist in the world.

The other new woodie is a real nostalgia machine – a wooden twister which harks back to the bone-shaking designs of coaster legend Harry Traver. However, unless you have a serious coaster habit, it's unlikely you'll have heard of Traver, but the man certainly new how to build a terrifying ride. His most notorious creation, the Crystal Beach Cyclone, didn't contain a single foot of straight track beyond the lift hill, and was so intense that it even had its own first-aid station and nurse!

Fans of historical rides will also be pleased to see the inclusion of the Virginia Reel, a gentle coaster-type ride featuring round, spinning cars



and hairpin bends.

Coasters aside, there are several other thrill machines including a ghost train, a new water ride and a cycle monorail. There's also a freefall ride known as the Gyro Drop, based on a ride which opened this year in Ohio. The tower is surrounded by a ring of seats which rotate on the way up to the top, thus affording the riders a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. But once it reaches the top, it drops like a stone, leaving your stomach behind.

On top of that, there's Jurassic and jungle theming, and signs which can be used to create an entrance to a themed area. This is by no means a complete list: Sawyer wants to keep some surprises for later...

THE PITCH: Even more scenarios and rides for this popular and fun theme park sim

THE PROSPECTS: Die hard coaster fans will lap it up, while RCT addicts will welcome all those new scenarios

DATE: October 1999

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C&C RENEGADE

Command & Conquer goes third-person 3D!



How many times have you wished you could jump into a Command & Conquer game and take part in the battle for real? Well soon you'll be able to. This 3D version of C&C is a project that has been around for some considerable time (Westwood claims it's almost finished), but has always been publicly denied by the company as pure gossip. This gossip did however have a name: C&C Commando. According to Louis Castle, Vice President and co-founder of Westwood, this was a code name designed to throw people off the scent. Fat chance.

Now finally Westwood has revealed a playable technology demo of the game which we saw running three weeks' ago. The name change has been minimal and C&C Renegade is scheduled to finish by Christmas, then be released early in the new Millennium. But remember, folks, this is Westwood...

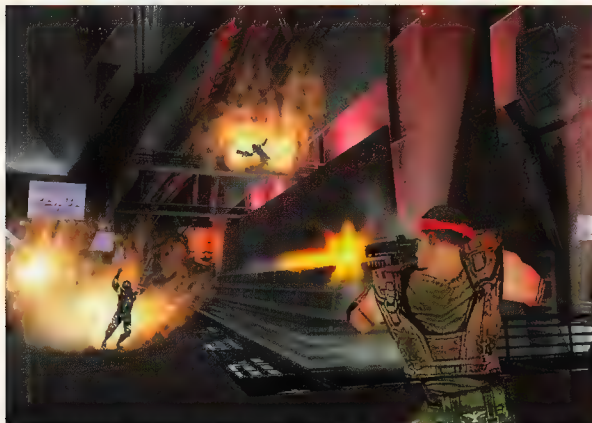
The story is said to have been born out of the sixth mission in the original Command &



Conquer, where you attack NOD with a solitary GDI commando. Now you are that commando. The renegade hero of the game is actually a fella called Jack Shepherd, son of the GDI's General Shepherd. The game will be played largely from a far-behind 3rd person view which allows you to scope out the lush 3D landscape. However, for interiors the view closes up to avoid awkward camera angles and to give a more enclosed feeling. There is also a first-person sniper and binocular mode.

Interiors look amazing and Westwood is using a lighting system known as Radiosity, which uses complicated maths to soften lights

This year's European Computer Trade Show took place in Olympia, London, from the 5th to 7th of September. It was swelteringly hot, noisy and crowded as usual and unfortunately several major games publishers were conspicuous by their absence – you won't find much news from GT Interactive or EA here, because they among others, kept a low profile. Nevertheless some momentous announcements were made over the three busy days. The next 13 pages tells all...



and create subtle reflections. All of the buildings in Renegade will be accessible and they will have multi level interiors.

What is most amazing about Renegade is the sudden realisation that you already know the world pretty much inside out. In the demo we walked into a NOD base and stood gazing up at a hand of NOD. It is certainly going to

weather the transformation from half-inch, one dimensional isometric drawing to towering seamless 3D building quite nicely. Wandering around the base was really a bit like being a child in a toyshop ('hey look, it's a refinery! And it's so big!').

The world acts like C&C too - when we blew up a NOD SAM site a NOD soldier

appeared out of the ruins blasting away as usual. Speaking of NOD soldiers, the infantry has specific hit points on their bodies so you can shoot them in the leg, arm or head and they'll react accordingly. They also have quite advanced AI - when we sniped one of a pair of NOD guards his companion ducked to the ground immediately and started looking for the culprit.

But it's not just infantry in the game - the complete GDI and NOD armouries and building trees are in there too so you'll encounter Buggies, Recon Bikes, Flame and Stealth Tanks, Artillery, Apaches, and Hovercraft. And of course you're supported by Mammoth Tanks, Orcas and Humm-Vees. And guess what... you can steal any of them and use them in your mission too. Indeed, some missions will involve using a vehicle from the outset.

During the demo we actually stole a NOD buggy and the vehicle physics demonstrated to us were spot on. Separate handling models for motorcycle, wheeled, tracked vehicles and aircraft will be included to provide as much realism as possible.

You only play as GDI in Renegade and there will be 15 missions in total. Although you're technically involved in a solo mission you will often find that there is a complete GDI assault happening on a NOD base that you can join or use as cover to infiltrate NOD's lines according to your objectives or whims. According to Louis Castle 'this is a fully functioning C&C world, everything that happens in C&C happens here', and you just happen to be in the middle of it all.

Multiplayer Renegade will involve both co-operative and competitive modes. The co-operative mode should be interesting because it lets you to take over vehicles together, one driving, one shooting etcetera.

The minimum PC specification is expected to be a PII 233 and the game will support D3D, Glide, and Open GL standards for 3D acceleration.

C&C Renegade was certainly one of the very biggest announcements of ECTS, and we can't wait to get our hands on a playable version. The shots on this page are 1200x800 resolution screens from the game by the way, so you can judge for yourself.

LABEL Westwood

DEVELOPER: In-house

DUE: Spring 2000

NEWS FROM THE SHOW

Genre by genre rundown of breaking news and fresh status reports on all those key titles

ACTION

There wasn't a whole lot of new stuff on show at this year's ECTS that we hadn't heard of or seen at E3, but there were some new games hidden among the stands and plenty of updates on software we've seen before.

Of the new titles Virgin's **Evo** certainly had oddball appeal. Set in a surreal sci-fi world, it's a squad based game which combines action and strategy, and gives you the chance to mutate your characters. SCI was showing **Carmageddon: The Death Race 2000**, which promises to be even more tasteless than before. The graphics are a little glitzy but the gameplay is as satisfyingly sick as ever. Ritual, makers of **SiN**, showed off **Heavy Metal: FAKK2**, a Tomb Raider-style action adventure based on Simon Bisley's off-colour graphic novel and starring a character based on Penthouse Pet Julie Strain. There were some interesting monsters and locations such as the Valley of the Lactating Breasts made for some unusual viewing, but it's safe to say Lara doesn't have much to fear.

Also on show was **Kiss Psycho Circus**, a first-person shooter based on a graphic novel starring the rock band Kiss. It's pretty surreal. If you've ever had a fear of clowns it'll give you the willies. But it's no Half-Life.

Rune, from Human Head, looked interesting: a kind of Norse version of Heretic II featuring a warrior called Ragnar. Still in development but looking very nifty indeed was Codemasters take on, in an oblique sort of way, Quake. Called **Off The Road**, it's a frantic off-road buggy ride – not incidentally to be confused with Rage's Off Road buggy game previewed on p35 this issue. And what has it got to do with Quake? Well there are no roads on the terrain, no boundaries and no tracks and the most interesting mode is a Capture The Flag game. Codemasters has also started talking about **Colin McRae 2** and a more arcade version of TOCA. So **TOCA World**, which is currently scheduled for Playstation may make it to PC eventually. There was a new version of Codemasters' **No Fear Downhill**

Mountain Biking game to be seen too – it's a strange and extremely mucky sport, and the game captures both of those aspects to a T. **Speed Demons** is a fast and arcadey race (Continued on page 53) ►

GRAND PRIX WORLD

If you've ever fancied being Eddie Jordan (and let's face it who wouldn't want pointy sideburns like that), then this rather tasty looking game from MicroProse should be just the ticket. It features a ten-season stint as manager of an F1 team and features all the pain and pleasure of the job from hiring and firing drivers, engineers and designers and negotiating contracts to sponsorship deals, selling shares in the team and organising partnerships with engine companies.

Car handling is subject to a diverse range of track conditions and you will have to fine tune and set up cars specifically for each track, adjusting them after you analyse their

performance in each of the practice laps.

The game looks great, especially the in-race scenes where you can watch multiple cars at once via different windows, monitoring their performance and issuing on-the-fly instructions where necessary to try and alter the final outcome. The track sides have been digitised from real photographs and are unusually convincing – this sort of thing doesn't always work out as intended.

MicroProse is certainly looking hot on the F1 front at the moment!

LABEL: MicroProse

DEVELOPER: In-house

DUE: November



HITMAN

One of the most interesting new games of ECTS was this mission-based, third-person action adventure from Eidos. Unlike most third-person games, it's not just a mixture of running and shooting but will require a lot of thought, strategic planning and stealth as you work your way through a series of increasingly difficult targets.

Initially, the titular hitman believes that he is carrying out orders for his usual agency, but eventually finds out that he is being used to rub out all traces of a genetic scientist's unethical experiments. As he gets further into the game, he realises that he himself was a genetic

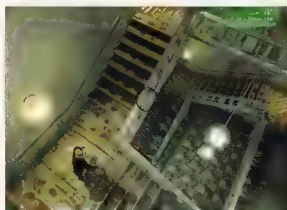
prototype, and his name is next on the list.

The game itself looks wonderful: there are over 80 unique characters, who can see, hear, speak and interact with their environments. The 20 intricately modelled locations are architecturally correct, as well as boasting an incredible amount of detail. You can shoot walls and furnishings with visible effects, leave bloody footprints and even drag bodies around. It's still early days yet, but this was one of the most promising games of the show.

LABEL: Eidos

DEVELOPER: IO Interactive

DUE: Summer 2000



GEOFF CRAMMOND'S GRAND PRIX 3

PC Game of the Show. There, you don't get a more positive endorsement than that. It's all the more remarkable since Grand Prix 3 is a dyed-in-the-wool hardcore simulation, still only running in software mode and competing with all manner of glamorous and visually outlandish newcomers.

But then we all know Crammond's track record with this series. The man's an obsessive when it comes to detailed simulation of Grand Prix racing – right down to pacing out the Monte Carlo circuit, and probably counting the exact number of toilet rolls in the pit crew khazi too – and it's no surprise to learn that his plan for this third outing is more detail and more reality. Naturally we're talking about all the cars, all the teams and drivers and all the circuits, based (courtesy of the current licensing arrangements, although Hasbro has just signed a five year deal with the FOA) on Hakkinen's victorious '98 season.

The game is getting a whole new graphics engine and physics model, revamping pretty much every aspect of the simulation from gear ratios to safety options, and including advanced setup adjustments for springs, ride height, dampers and anti-roll bars. Car rolls and tumbles will also be accurately modelled for the first time in the series, and detailed performance analysis will be logged on each saved lap of a race.

It was too early for any fancy visuals at the show while the game was still only running in software mode (although that in itself was impressive), but the team are currently working on a number of key features. These include safety cars, weather effects, driving aids for rookies, and a moving virtual cockpit which alters your driving view to simulate acceleration and braking forces in action. Most welcome of all will be an eight player networked mode (Internet play is unlikely given latency restrictions)

Perhaps the most surprising thing of all though is that the development team swear, hand on heart and fingers only a little bit crossed, that the game will be out in the first quarter of next year. Now, any racing fan who has had to wait for a Crammond Grand Prix opus before will know that they can take a bit of time to materialise. Years, in fact. We know it will boast unparalleled attention to detail and is almost certain to set new standards in racing simulation, so here's hoping it arrives sooner rather than later attention

LABEL: MicroProse
DEVELOPER: In house
DUE: Spring 2000



TOMB RAIDER - THE LAST REVELATION

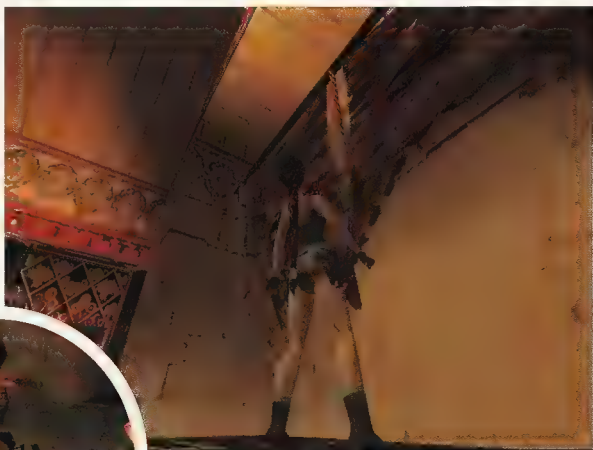
Although Core Design announced the fourth Tomb Raider game at the E3 show in May, ECTS was the first chance most people would get to see it properly. Housed in the Eidos suite, which had been decorated to look like Lara's mansion, complete with Egyptian knick-knacks, the game was looking pretty smooth and polished. It's due for a pre-Christmas release, and after having a quick play around with it, there doesn't seem to be any reason why it would slip into next year.

As reported in our August issue, the new game is set entirely in Egypt, and visits such famous locations as the Valley of the Kings and the Pyramids of Giza. Although the game will take as long to play as previous Tomb Raiders, the locations themselves are smaller and you won't have to wander around huge maps in search of small items or single switches. Your goals are all very clearly defined, and the items and information you need to reach your objectives will all be reasonably close to hand. It is also puzzle based, and though there is plenty of combat, the balance is closer to the first Tomb Raider than the second or third.

So what's new? First up, Lara is looking a little better this time around. Gone are the multiple costume changes of Tomb Raider III, since Lara's famous green top and tight shorts are perfect for Egypt's hot climate. However, the green top is now more of a low-cut leotard these days, which should please the lads.

Lara herself has been fully skinned with remodelled hands and head. She can now blink and move her mouth, and will turn her head towards important things she encounters during a level, rather like Manny did in Grim Fandango. She also has a number of new moves. She can now shimmy around corners, climb up and down ropes and swing on them, Tarzan-style. She can also open doors by hand, or if they're particularly stubborn, resort to shoulder-barging, kicking or prising them open with a crowbar. In addition, she can open trap doors and search bodies.

The story is the strongest and most coherent for a while. Lara has been hired to uncover a tomb which, unbeknownst to her, houses



the evil god Set. She unwittingly sets about a chain of events which will culminate with his reappearance on Earth, spelling destruction to all and sundry. This in turn has the effect of bringing statues and skeletons to life, so Lara will have to do battle with mythological creatures such as sphinxes, mummies and wraiths. Not all of these can be killed easily – for example, Lara may have to dive into water to elude the burning effect of the fire wraiths, and skeletons can only be dispatched by a shot to the head, courtesy of a laser targeting pistol.

As always, Lara will rely on her twin Colts, but she also gets to play with shotguns, Uzis, grenades and a very accurate, targetable crossbow. When she uses this, perspective will switch to first person. She'll also get her hands on a jeep, and a motorbike and sidecar.

One of the most interesting things about the game is the first level, which replaces the training level of previous games but also

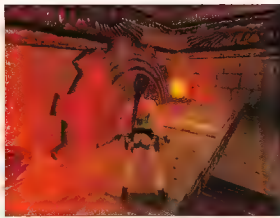
serves to set the scene for the main game. It takes place in Cambodia in the past, and sees the 16 year old Lara training under the tutelage of her mentor, Von Croy. During this section, he teaches her how to perform all her moves, and culminates with a full-motion video sequence in which Lara is forced to leave her tutor for dead after an accident threatens them both.

Von Croy, however, returns as Lara's arch-enemy in the game proper, and will appear throughout the game. Lara also has help in the form of fellow archaeologist Jean-Yves, and there will be some sexual tension between them, rather like Mulder and Scully in X-Files. However, when Von Croy kidnaps Jean-Yves, Lara must rescue him – a nice reverse on the damsel in distress theme.

LABEL: Eidos

DEVELOPER: Core Design

DUE: November



NEWS FROM THE SHOW

game from Microids. Its forgiving race model means it's easy to get into and just go – and the booster super-fast mode is hectic.

A new company on the UK scene, Crave Entertainment, showcased **Killer Loop** which as its name implies is a track-based arcade-style race game that's also playable online.

Acclaim was showing off **South Park Rally**, a Mario Karts-style arcade driving game in which you can play South Park favourites such as Cartman, Kenny, Chef and Mr Garrison around a series of wacky courses.

South Park: Chef's Luv Shack was also announced by Acclaim. It's a multiplayer trivia game where up to four gamers take the role of Cartman, Kenny, Kyle, or in episode-inspired mini-games such as 'Cartman's German Song', 'Beefcake', and 'Spank the Monkey with Mr. Mackey'. Acclaim also had

Trickstyle on show (previewed last month) and it looked very tasty.

Felony Pursuit from THQ is a racer along the same lines as *Driver* but with even more eye candy in evidence. The player can race as the cops or the robbers and the game has a distinctly console-style action look.

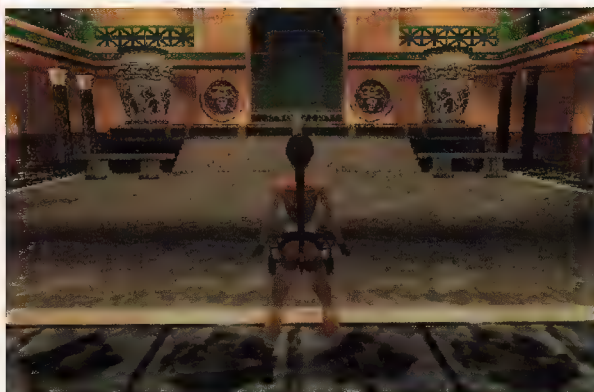
MicroProse had the rather neat looking **Stunt GP** arcade racing sim, based on remote control cars, alongside **GP500** (previewed this issue) and **Spirit Of Speed 1937**, the classic car on classic circuit racer.

Prince Of Persia 3D was very much in evidence with blokes in Arab costumes wandering around the show trying to encourage you to play it. It's finished now, and we'll be bringing you a review next issue.

Rage has been busy beaver away on a follow-up to *Incoming*, called **Incoming Forces**, set even further in the future, and featuring even more eye candy. **Hostile Waters**, the action/strategy game announced by Rage last year has slipped again until next year, but it still looks very promising indeed.

Fox was showing **Die Hard Trilogy 2**, which features shoot-outs and car chases in a fictional Las Vegas. No technological breakthroughs here, but it might be fun. Also on display was **Alien Resurrection**, in which you get to play one of five major characters from the titular movie. Although it's going to be difficult to top *Aliens Versus Predator*, this offers a different style of play for those who prefer a small adventure element with their action.

Finally, although there was nothing on show for it, the arrival of a follow-up to *Hidden & Dangerous* was tentatively confirmed. (Continued on page 56) ►



NEW YORK NEW YORK SO GOOD YOU LANDED TWICE.

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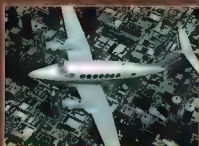
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NEWS FROM THE SHOW

STRATEGY AND WAR

The Virgin stand was home to one of the more interesting realtime strategy games: **Invictus**. Instead of the usual modern warfare or fantasy options, this is set in Ancient Greece and features all the heroes and monsters of Greek mythology. Also on the stand was **Heist**, in which you control a team of criminals for 20 different missions ranging from sticking up gas stations to diamond robberies. It's reminiscent of *Syndicate*, and looks like it could be fun.

Red Storm had **Shadow Watch**, a turn-based game which harks back to the XCOM series but has distinctive comic book-style graphics and characters. Looked fun.

Hasbro had **Diplomacy** and **Risk II** on offer for fans of the board games who don't want to lose their friends in arguments over territory. **XCOM Alliance**, the first-person 3D version of the series was on show at MicroProse, although news that it has slipped until mid-next year was not good.

Empire had **Wargamer: Napoleon 1813** as one of the few turn-based strategy representatives at the show and Mindscape and Red Orb turned up with news of a real-time version of the **Warlords** series and a new **Warhammer 40,000** game as well as **Panzer General 3D Assault** and **Close Combat IV**, both of the latter being featured in our preview section this month.

Ubi Soft had the rather nice-looking **Shadow Company** on show alongside **Seven Kingdoms II** and a turn-based WWII game called **The Road To Moscow**.

Zabrac returns to the real-time fray with **Tzar**, a sort of cross between Age Of Empires gameplay and Settlers III visuals, with a spot of fantasy roleplaying thrown in. Should be fun if it steers clear of me-too features and beefs up the characterful roleplaying aspect.

Business sim **Start Up** from Monte Christo Multimedia which we first saw in May is nearing completion. Grow your high-tech business handling R&D, fund raising, manufacture, marketing and distribution. Serious stuff, but fascinating too.

Kingdom Under Fire is a graphically good looking real-time strategy affair from Phantogram. Interest stems from the look which is sort of medieval and far-eastern, and from the quite detailed roleplaying aspects which your characters can develop.

Cryo's **Fireteam** was an innovative development. It's an online game in a co-operative squad-based isometric real-time (continued on page 61)

TEAM FORTRESS 2

Valve shot from obscurity to fame with just one game, *Half-Life*. Its next game is this sequel to the legendary Quake 'mod', *Team Fortress* where class-based multiplayer first person warfare first got a public airing. Valve originally released a free *Half-Life* add on called *Team Fortress Classic* but *Team Fortress 2* is going to be the true sequel with an updated engine and much enhanced game play.

Sadly the same elements were being demonstrated at ECTS as its first outing in Los Angeles, at E3, but it still looks excellent. The soldiers are incredibly detailed with over 3000 polygons in each character and when you're engaging in an online battle, you will be able to talk to your squadmates with real-time voice complete with lip-synching. This looks absolutely superb. To avoid gender complications with hunky marines speaking in high pitched Essex girl voices, there are male and female characters in the game.

Co-operation is the name of the game as you assault and defend compounds and other team members can, for instance, load belts into heavy machine guns to increase the overall fire rate of the gun. There are twelve different character classes including cool ones like the Spy who can kill a member of another team and actually steal their uniform to infiltrate the enemy's zone.

In a key difference from the original, TF2 has a new commander class who will be able to play the entire game from an overhead real-time map, like an RTS game, issuing orders to the squads under his command. This 'Tribes-

like idea should be just the ticket to bring real coordinated tactics and strategy to the game.

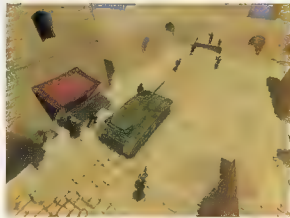
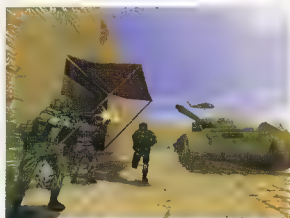
Also, like *Starsiege Tribes*, there are lots of operating vehicles in TF2 including helicopters, tanks and APCs – again cooperation and teamwork is the name of the game, many vehicles requiring a pilot and a gunner for example. *Team Fortress 2* is seriously tipped to be a major force on the multiplayer scene when it is released at the end of the year.

While there weren't any new pictures of TF2 we did get some screenies from the hotly anticipated *Half-Life* mission pack, *Opposing Forces* – though this wasn't on display at the show for some reason.

LABEL: Sierra

DEVELOPER: Valve

DUE: December



WARCRAFT III

Having just seen the retro-looking Tiberian Sun it came as somewhat of a surprise to see the next version of C&C's fine peer, WarCraft – it's been transformed from an isometric fantasy real-time strategy game into a fully rotational 3D roleplaying/adventure/real-time strategy hybrid extravaganza. As you can see from the screenshots it looks completely different to the original game. Though it is set in the same Azeroth universe, it's now one where both Orcs and Humans are under threat from a Demon invasion which will add up to four other races to the game. This could potentially pave the way for six campaigns, but although Blizzard was guarded about letting too many secrets go, you might even play the various

races as part of a bigger overall campaign.

The screenshots here look mighty fine, but when they're actually moving the characters in the game are truly excellent. Leave a grunt standing around doing nothing and he'll start throwing axes in the air. The fighting animations are very martial arts inspired and each character has several different moves. Meanwhile the landscapes are beautiful to behold with scenery fading into an atmospheric misty horizon.

Each character in the game has a lots of different and humorous voice responses, instead of the single ones from WarCraft II. Clicking on them is great fun until after a few times one shouts at you: 'Oh come on, stop bugging me!' Neutral characters spice up the game and

allow you to fight for treasure in skeleton villages and other sinister places.

You start off from a village where units are produced in a vaguely similar way to WarCraft III, but Blizzard is at pains to point out that resource management is a much more minor part of the game than ever before. The whole new RPG/Adventure element has been added by the inclusion of Heroes, treasure hunts and quests. In many ways the idea seems very similar to the Warlords or Heroes Of Might & Magic series of turn-based strategy games and it changes the essential fabric of WarCraft immeasurably. Rather than building lots of units for mass pitched battles like WarCraft II, here you will be more subtle with heroes of special abilities leading bands of maybe up to 15 hand-picked units.

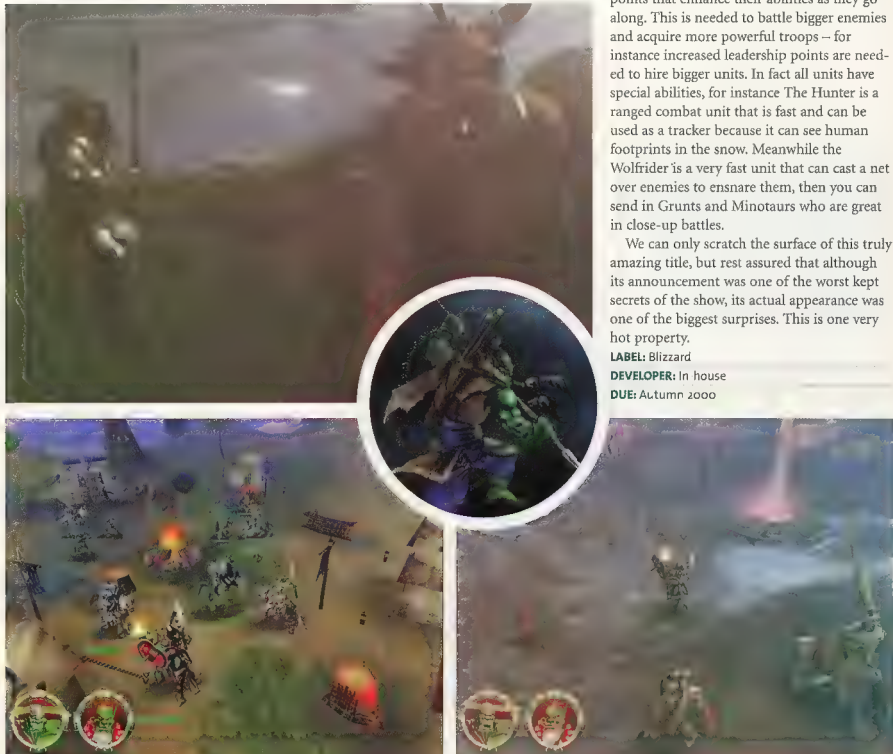
Heroes have their own fighting, leadership and magic stats and will gain experience points that enhance their abilities as they go along. This is needed to battle bigger enemies and acquire more powerful troops – for instance increased leadership points are needed to hire bigger units. In fact all units have special abilities, for instance The Hunter is a ranged combat unit that is fast and can be used as a tracker because it can see human footprints in the snow. Meanwhile the Wolfrider is a very fast unit that can cast a net over enemies to ensnare them, then you can send in Grunts and Minotaurs who are great in close-up battles.

We can only scratch the surface of this truly amazing title, but rest assured that although its announcement was one of the worst kept secrets of the show, its actual appearance was one of the biggest surprises. This is one very hot property.

LABEL: Blizzard

DEVELOPER: In house

DUE: Autumn 2000



BLACK & WHITE

Peter Molyneux's latest wonder world was first revealed in playable form to us around six months ago at BAFTA and the Lionhead team has been busy beavering away ever since imparting gameplay to what was an incredibly advanced technology engine. At ECTS we had a sneak peek at how it is coming on and the refinements were plain to see – this game is still one of the most exciting developments due out next year.

For those who are unfamiliar with the concept of Black & White, the game is the latest development in Molyneux's long standing love affair with god simulations and combines elements seen in past games – Populous, Powermonger and Dungeon Keeper – into one obsessively detailed game that looks likely to bring the genre onto a whole new level.

The basic premise behind the game is a four way relationship between you, as a god, the little people who inhabit the lands you are god in, a creature whom you adopt to do your worldly bidding and other gods, their creatures and the little people who follow them.

The revolutionary technology behind the game lies in both the graphics engine and, perhaps even more so, in the artificial intelligence and infinitely variable life development model which has been created for creatures. The screenshots on this page speak for themselves as far as the look of the game is concerned, but the cool thing is that the camera is completely movable – it can point in any direction and view the landscape or objects from any height, from close up examinations of the little people to a astronaut's eye view of the planet. And it moves between these two extremes fast and seamlessly with a swish of the mouse – we've tried it.

When you choose a creature at the beginning of a game you'll be choosing it for life, not just for Christmas. When you are given charge of a little bi-pedal tiger, or a cow or maybe a humanoid, according to your preference, they will be scarcely larger than the little people, and from then on they grow under your influence, eventually to enormous proportions. If the overall game concept reminds

us of Populous or Dungeon Keeper, the creatures system is more like Tamagotchi or Creatures. It's your responsibility to teach them, develop them and keep them busy. You can pick them up and deposit them wherever you want them to do or learn something, you can praise or punish them and as you do so they grow personalities and physical traits. If you feed them too much they will get fat and greedy, too little they will be thin and moribund. If you get them to do evil things they will become evil and knotted, if they're good they gain a saintly aura. If they fight a lot they will be battle scarred.

The variations are enormous. You can teach them how, what and when to eat and, this is no joke, where to defecate. That's right, your creatures must answer the call of nature and you can get them to do it on your neighbour's land if you like.

As the title of the game indicates there's a relationship between good and evil in Black & White and you can choose to follow either path. Your power as a god depends on how much of a following you have among the little people and you can choose to gain this following through love or fear. You have the ability to cast miracles and it is by showing folk your presence on a regular basis by doing so that your gain their 42 miracles with 42 powerups are planned and you can also teach your creature spells that they will use independently.

The interface is even simpler than Dungeon Keeper's and more than a little reminiscent of that game's. Your mouse controls a godly hand that can manipulate and pick up objects, pick up creatures and administer punishment to them if they are naughty – or perhaps if they are not naughty enough. Miracles are also cast by picking them up and 'throwing' them with the mouse.

The detail we saw at ECTS was much greater than at BAFTA and animations had greatly increased. The fight we saw between a cow and a gorilla included some neat martial arts moves while there will be a feature that allows you to play one of your own CDs and have your creature dance to it – the tiger is especially good at breakdancing, while the cow is a bit more conservative.

This game is moving on now at considerable pace and should be ready next year. There is going to be a free 'adopt a creature' online version early next year (February is the planned date) where you can enter a world, take control of a creature and interact with others, although once you log out of the game your creature will be deleted.

LABEL: Lionhead

DEVELOPER: In house

DUE: Spring/Summer 2000



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NOCTURNE

Nocturne has made great strides since it appeared at the 1998 ECTS a year ago. The atmospheric action adventure was visually impressive back then, but now it looks absolutely incredible.

You play an operative for a secret government agency known as Spookhouse, which is somewhere between *Men in Black* and the *X-Files*. It is your pleasant task to rid the world of supernatural nastiness, and so you must travel the globe from the black forests of Germany to small western ghost towns, doing away with monsters, vampires, zombies and werewolves.

Much of this third-person game's unsettling atmosphere comes from its masterful use of light and shadow. Fog, shadows, lighting and



reflections are all done in real time, which sounds clinical written down but in practise means lots of shadowy corners, eerie shapes and malevolent red eyes peering out from the

darkness. The skeletal system used for the characters ensures animation is as realistic as possible, and you can blow limbs off some characters or watch them morph from one shape into another. There are some amazing effects, such as the way your character's coat swirls around him as he moves – cloth has its own set of algorithms, and different weights of cloth move in different ways.

The overall effect is a game rich in suspense – this is one to

play late at night with the lights down low.

LABEL: Take 2

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality/god

DUE: October 31

PROJECT IGI

Project IGI (which stands for "I'm going in," and is the working title) is the thinking man's first person shooter. Set in the world of counter-terrorism, the game has you riding on top of trains, stealing planes, dangling from cable cars, ambushing convoys and storming terrorist bases. You play SAS veteran Jones, who now works for the British government, carrying out the sort of jobs the government won't admit to.

To begin with, Jones is sent to spring a man from a military prison in order to gain information about a biological attack aimed at America's East Coast. He must first try to halt

the weapons trade before hunting those who threaten his political masters, and ultimately he has to choose between national interests and personal loyalty.

There will be a lot of stealthy sneaking around, disarming alarm systems and stealing vehicles as well as the usual gunplay, but of course you'll have lots of weapons to play with, all based on real-world equivalents. The most striking thing, though, is the vast 3D world you get to run around in – from detailed interiors to huge outdoor locations. Stunning,



LABEL: Eidos

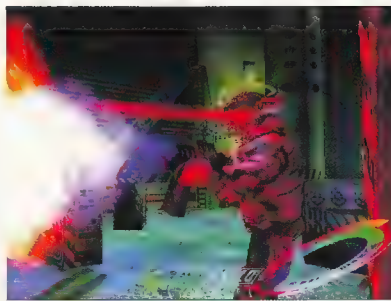
DEVELOPER: Innerloop Studios

DUE: Spring 2000

MESSIAH

Messiah has been around for years, and has been the subject of many column inches thanks to the revolutionary technology which it contains. It makes use of Shiny's own RT-DAT (Real Time Deformation and Tessellation) system which creates characters who have bone and muscle structures and move as a real person would, and a higher level of detail than normal thanks to a greatly increased polygon count. So far, no-one has seen very much of the game though, beyond a technical demo showing a prostitute dancing.

At ECTS, however, there was some game-play there. You play Bob, a cherub character who can possess the bodies of anyone he can sneak up on. In his juvenile form, he is highly vulnerable, so he needs a human shell to



achieve what he wants. The game takes place in a huge, grim metropolis and covers 14 large levels, and Bob must use his wits to get around. He can become anything from a gun

wielding cop to a hooker, and be as nice or evil as the player wishes. In the demo we witnessed, Bob possessed the body of a cop before opening fire on his fellow officers, wiping them all out. Before quitting the cop's body, he threw away the gun so the cop couldn't shoot him, and jumped off a high gantry so the cop would break his legs and be unable to chase him. It'll be an interesting game because Bob's ability to possess anyone makes him incredibly versatile, and it will

also be interesting from a moral standpoint.
LABEL: Interplay
DEVELOPER: Shiny Entertainment
DUE: November

FINAL FANTASY VIII

The first of the Final Fantasy series to make it to the PC, last year's FFXVII, was critically well-received as a reasonably accomplished port of a seminal roleplaying series. Sales-wise, it sold less than Barbie Riding Club.

Final Fantasy VIII may well change all that. The latest in a long running saga that dates back to the Eighties this role-playing adventure screams 'epic' at every turn. It makes no bones, unlike most of today's games, of talking about love, romance and destiny – adventurous storylines are, after all, what makes the Final Fantasy series so special.

This time, a loner cadet by the name of Squall Leonhart is dragged into the middle of a growing conflict between two neighbouring countries, Galbadia and Dollet. The situation deteriorates following a chance encounter with the enigmatic Rinoa Heartilly. She's a wilful young woman – the sort your mother warned you about – and in no time she manages to turn Squall's world upside down. It

also transpires that the Galbadian are linked with a powerful sorceress called Edea. Squall has a large mountain or two to climb, so it would seem.

The developers are keeping very low-key about technical details, but there's no doubt that this game will boast a significantly enhanced graphics engine to that of FFXVII, with some truly spectacular weapon and magic effects. While it maintains the stylised feel and highly detailed backdrops, the characters have been given a much more realistic western-look.

Also the inventory and combat systems are being considerably revamped. If you like your games big on story, scale, music and adventure (and can keep a straight face at lines like 'The chequered destiny of two men who continuously plunge their mighty souls into battle') Final Fantasy VIII is unlikely to disappoint.

LABEL: Edos Interactive

DEVELOPER: Squaresoft

DUE: Christmas



NEWS FROM THE SHOW

strategy style. The game is pretty good fun to play in small groups of up to 12 players – there are four tactical combat scenarios with multiple arenas for each game and it comes with a headset so you can talk to your squad-mates and opponents.

If you had to choose the most bizarre game of the show then Microids' **Empire Of The Ants** would be a hot contender. This is an ant hill sim, apparently adapted from a million-copy selling real science and fantasy book by Bernard Werber. Oh, and, by the way – the million copies have been sold in France. It's a game of two halves. Inside the ant hill it's a SimCity affair only with eggs and your Queen. But outside the game is a Command & Conquer effort with ants, marauding preying mantises, huge daisies and toadstools.

The Sims from Maxis was at the show in force and although we hate to admit it, it's beginning to look a bit more interesting than at its first sighting at E3. It's all about micromanaging a character's life, and indeed the lives of his family once he has one. Sierra had a 3D real time strategy game in a similar vein to MechCommander, called **Ground Zero**. In it you take a group of preselected units into a beautiful textured 3D world and battle it out for supremacy. This could be one to watch.

SPORTS

For a nation so in love with sport, this was a genre strangely foreign to ECTS – possibly something to do with the absence of EA Sports from the show, even though a new version of FIFA is on the way. Plus little news was available from Gremlin/Infogrames about Actua, or Eidos about World League Soccer. The show focussed mainly on management with Anco displaying the latest version of their venerable Player Manager franchise – **PM2000**. Ubi Soft was back with a Y2K version of its Ron Atkinson sim – **Football World Manager** too while Empire is also jumping on the bandwagon with the rather plainly named **Football Manager**. New kids on the block Midas Interactive had a game called **ProXtreme Bodyboarding** featuring world bodyboarding champion Mike Stewart.

SIMULATION

MicroProse's **B17: The Mighty Eighth** was wowing folk throughout the show with its superb graphics and involving multi-station gameplay. As well as flying the B17 you will also be able to fly in escort fighters and

(continued on page 62)

NEWS FROM THE SHOW



German interceptors. **Gunship 3** had us all drooling at the mouths too, with its superbly implemented transparent cockpit and weapons effects that have to be seen to be believed.

Rage featured a game called **Midnight GT** with standard Japanese road legal cars turbo-charged up. It's due around December, but Rage isn't well known for sticking to deadlines, so we'll wait and see. Midas Interactive introduced us to two new simulations – one in motocross, **Extreme Motocross**, and one for Go Karting. The go karting one – **Super Karting Simulation** – looked very nice indeed and could be the game to finally get this type of racing right.

Digital Integration was present with **Super Hornet** (previewed this issue) while **Flanker 2.0** from Mindscape is now well under way – but still has a chance to beat Falcon 4.0's 'worst slippage' record. Jane's was conspicuous by its absence. Empire had a range of driving sims in its pub (the company took over the top floor of a pub to demonstrate its product – with free beer on offer, hic!) including one called **Ford Racing** where you get to charge around tracks in Ford's current product range, including European and American cars. It sounds a bit naff, we know, but it's actually rather good. They also had a GT game called **World Sports Cars**, due early next year.

ADVENTURE AND ROLEPLAYING

Interplay was showing **Planescape Torment**, the next game to be based on BioWare's

Baldur's Gate game engine. It's set in a more surreal universe than Baldur's Gate so it has a slightly offbeat appeal, but it's looking very nice indeed.

Atlantis II from Cryo was looking extremely gorgeous, and as well as the beautiful pre-rendered vistas, promises more satisfying gameplay than its predecessor. Discreet Monsters' **The Real Neverending Story** was shaping up very nicely, with its advanced 3D engine looking very good indeed, and while **Diablo II** was not actually being shown by Blizzard it did turn up on 3Dfx's stand and was a blast to play.

NOX, from Westwood, is coming along nicely, if a tad bizarrely. It'll be interesting to see how people adapt to an action/roleplaying hybrid that features an American school kid as its central character. Another unusual roleplaying/adventure was **Seeker** from the Logic Factory, a 3D outing set on another world which humans are transported to. It sounds a bit like Outcast, but doesn't look at all like it, being played from a different perspective and with role-playing disciplines added and a strange and wonderful selection of creatures on offer. This one was well weird. **Shining Lore**, from Phantagram, is an animee-styled RPG vaguely in the Final Fantasy VII mould, but your party are all young females. Apparently this sort of thing is massive in the Far East. Finally, **Simon The Sorcerer 3D** made a welcome reappearance on the Hasbro stand with an expected release date of early 2000.

HARDWARE AT ECTS

There was a lot of activity on the peripherals front, particularly Force Feedback controllers (including Logitech with a Force Feedback mouse) and 3D audio solutions, although nothing particularly revolutionary. Unsurprisingly most noise was being made by the 3D accelerator business as it psyched itself up for another bruising round of new technology announcements.

3Dfx announced its T-Buffer technology for the forthcoming Napalm chip. T-Buffer is something of a spoiler for more important issues like Transformation and Lighting (T&L was the consensus opinion). However Napalm (ready for Christmas) will boast full scene anti-aliasing, motion-blur and other fancy effects, and do the traditional 3Dfx thing of hammering out some truly massive fills rates. 3Dfx also announced that it would be making available source code for its own texture compression technology, intended to improve on S3TC.

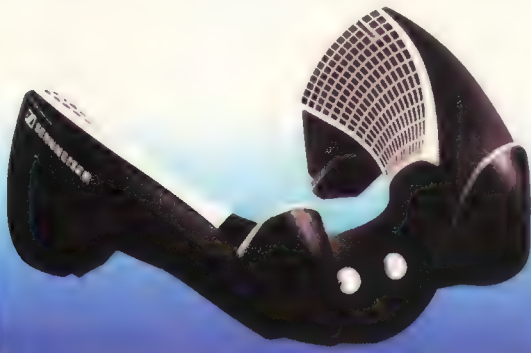
nVidia had some very impressive silicon on show, due to go on sale in a mere couple of weeks (at the time of writing). The much-discussed NV10 chip ups the ante considerably with hardware support for T&L, something which should have a very significant effect on the performance of games running under OpenGL and DirectX 7 (when it ships). However noticeably absent from the specification was any hardware support for texture compression, which is already proving to be one of the TNT2's weak points. S3 announced details of the forthcoming 0.18 micron GX4

chip which will appear in the Savage 2000 from Diamond. Like the NV10, it also supports T&L but should run considerably cooler than the more muscular nVidia part.

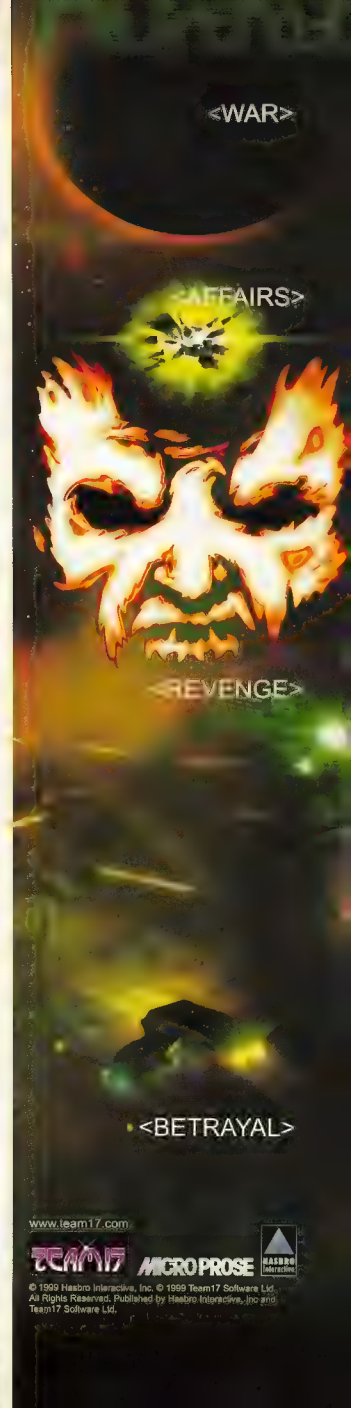
Much to our surprise the nice chap from Videologic popped up like Mr Benn's shopkeeper brandishing a boxed and ready-to-review Neon 250 PowerVR 2 board (from the same family powering the Sega Dreamcast), whereupon we came over all faint. This is, after all, a chip that was originally supposed to compete with the launch of the Voodoo 2 or some other chip from the dim and distant mists of time, Blimey.

Elsewhere, our hearts went out to two items of hardware in particular. First was the Sennheiser Surround, a shoulder mounted four channel speaker system (pictured). No, we aren't joking. Priced at £199 and with a Dolby Pro Logic decoder version also available, the Surround provides enhanced atmospheric audio, doesn't drown out the rest of the room or clutter it with four-plus-one speaker sets and is remarkably lightweight and comfortable in use. It does make you look like an utter plonker, though.

And finally there's the Blaze Dance Air Mat, a Playstation and (soon to be) PC add-on that does roughly the same job as those big coin-ops running Konami's bizarre dancing game in the arcades. Once a few licensing issues are resolved and software finalised, this 3'x3' mat with its pressure sensitive pads will go on sale for £29. So expect to see the ultimate PC exerciser on sale around Christmas.



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NEW WINDOWS FOR

What does Microsoft's latest version of Windows 98 mean for gamers? And is it also time to take a peak at what's in store for the future...

Love it or hate it, if you want to play games on the PC, the only choice for gamers is Microsoft's Windows 95 or 98. While no one could accuse the monopolistic operating system of being fast, stable or bug free – we do have to admit that it has improved with each revision since the original release of Windows 95. The latest in the line of these revised editions is known as Windows 98 Second Edition. Roughly speaking, the '98 equivalent of the so-called 'OSR 2' version of Windows 95.

What's changed in 98SE since the first version? Mostly it's all the downloadable patches such as Year 2000 fixes, Internet Explorer 5.0, NetMeeting 3.0, Media Player 6.2, DirectX 6.1 and improved support for USB etc. In fact the internal support for a whole host of hardware has been updated – 98SE out of the box knows about more hardware than ever before.

There are also changes to the operating system that aren't as visible as the new features and versions of applications provided. For a start, I noticed that the hang-on-shutdown problem has come back. That's interesting

since it went away totally on 98 compared to 95. There are some things that can be done to fix this but it's annoying all the same. That's about the only negative point though, the good news is that 98SE appears more stable. In fact I use it as my primary operating system here at *PC Gaming World* and I'm definitely suffering fewer random unexplained crashes and strange screwups that require a reboot to fix.

There is only one new feature that is only available with a 98 Special Edition upgrade and not available as a web download. This is the so-called Internet Connection Sharing system. This marvellous software is a cut down system like a 'firewall' on an office LAN. Basically if you've got a modem on one computer at home, by running the ICS system on that machine, any other computers at home

on your local LAN will also be able to access the Internet. Yes folks, that includes games.

Of course if you're talking action games, then two players on one modem is going to be unplayable due to the way that those games use up most of your modem's bandwidth. However there are plenty of games where it's not so much of a problem – real time strategy games, RPGs like *EverQuest* and so on. Even if you're just using it for picking up email and a bit of web browsing then it's darn handy indeed. There are third-party software packages like WinGate that bolt this functionality onto an existing Windows 95/98. However they cost money and consist of a system that requires changing the Internet settings on the machines trying to share the connection – a lot more hassle than the ICS of Win98SE. Take it from me, I've done both.

GETTING INTERNET CONNECTION SHARING RUNNING ON

For the sake of simplicity, we'll assume that you've got a LAN setup and it's working at the moment. You should be running TCP/IP as the protocol on the LAN as this is the standard for Internet communications. You can continue to run a protocol such as IPX for games that require it such as *Tiberian Sun*. The method I have found which is most foolproof differs somewhat from the (poor) instructions in the Win98SE help database. Here's how it goes:

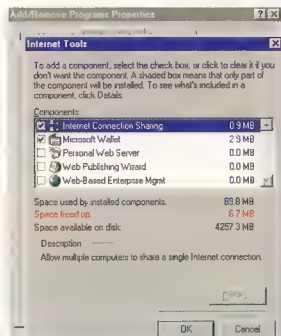
First the machine that has the modem we'll refer to as the gateway PC. We will need to change the so-called IP Address to 192.168.0.1. To do this, hold down alt and double-click on your network neighborhood icon on your desktop. Then click on the TCP/IP compatible protocol line in the scroll box, that points to your network card. (Not the one that points to the dial-up adaptor). Click on this and the properties button. In the IP address tab of this box, put in 192.168.0.1. Enter the subnet mask as 255.255.255.0. Make sure there is nothing in the DNS tab of the TCP/IP properties either.

We'll need to do something similar on your other machines on your LAN later. You'll be asked for a reboot, cancel this for now. Go into the control panel via the startbar

start/settings/control panel. Then click on the add/remove programs icon. Go to the Windows Setup tab and scroll down to click on Internet Tools. Then click on details and tick the box that says Internet Connection Sharing. You can now press OK and Windows will prompt for the Win98SE CD and copy some files onto the system. A wizard should appear wanting to set up some details. You just need to select dial-up adapter as the Internet connection you want to share and your network card as the connection to the other computers on your LAN.

If Windows wants to reboot without setting up those details, simply run the Internet Options setup in your control panel. Click on the Connections tab and you should see a Sharing box at the bottom underneath LAN settings. Here tick both Enable Internet Connection Sharing and the option allowing you to add a status icon to your system tray. That can be handy if you want to temporarily disable Internet sharing by just right-clicking on this icon in the system tray and selecting disable. All that remains is to set up the other machines on your LAN.

For this, go into your Network Neighborhood properties and click on the TCP/IP protocol bound to the network card in



This is how you add the ICS software

GAMERS



WINDOWS 2000 - A FIRST LOOK

Microsoft made no secret of the fact that it always intended to vanquish the creaky old DOS-based Windows 9x-based operating systems in favour of the internet fully 32-bit Windows NT. Of course there are a great many reasons why this operating system is viable for the gamer, much of which has to do with hardware support and the lack of an up-to-date version of Direct X.

Windows 2000, allegedly due for the end of this year but more likely the beginning of 2000, is essentially Windows NT with all the features of Windows 9x such as plug and play. Currently it is in beta testing and already sports Direct X 7.0 - the absolute latest version of Microsoft's interface to gaming hardware.

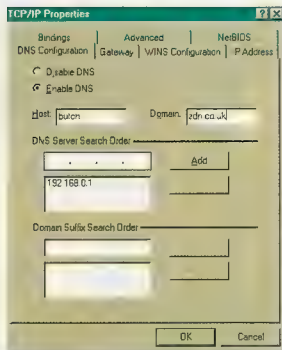
Installing the latest beta, referred to as 'Release Candidate 1' on a PC, it became very apparent that this is definitely Windows NT dressed up and not a souped-up Windows 98. While technically the operating system should be as stable as NT (running for days without crashing) and able to run all of the hard core games - sadly things don't pan out that way in the beta. The built-in Internet Explorer 5 likes to crash to the extent that a reboot is required and there are critical problems with games to do with the way that the registry is set up for a

multiple user environment. In fact, short of Quake engine games, I could get very little to run on Windows 2000. Hacking the registry meant marginally more success but so far the picture doesn't look great.

When Windows 2000 is released, it looks as if we'll face the biggest games compatibility problem since Windows 3.1. Fortunately it's fairly easy to set up a so-called dual-boot system and load up either Windows 2000 or Windows 98. Why would you want to? Because Windows 2000 is certainly the more pleasant and stable system to use if you can - many of the internal elements are decidedly superior to the legacy operating systems. Hopefully games developers will release patches to shore up their games to work with Windows 2000. From my experience of the genuine improvement of this operating system I certainly hope they do.

Puzzlingly though, it seems Microsoft itself has cold feet concerning the impending compatibility problems. Going against its earlier plan, there will be yet another legacy OS next year code-named Millennium. Whether we'll want to run that instead of Windows 2000 will depend on how well game developers take to the latter. But, if you want to play your old DOS games, you're going to need Win9x anyhow.

Mat Bettinson



Configuring a machine to share the connection

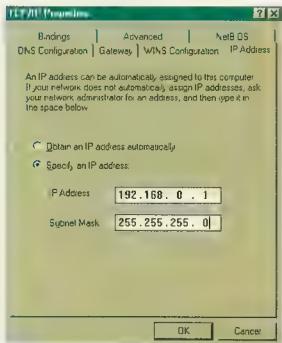
98 SPECIAL EDITION

this machine. I recommend that you choose an IP address for each machine by just changing the last digit. 192.168.0.2, 192.168.0.3 etc. 192.168.0.1 is always your PC with the Internet connection. So enter the unique IP address you've chosen for each machine, and also enter a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0. Now click on the Gateway tab and enter 192.168.0.1 and press add. Then click on the DNS tab and click on 'enable DNS'. Place 192.168.0.1 in the DNS search order box and click Add. Fill in some made-up name in the 'host' box and your ISP domain such as dircon.co.uk in the domain and that's it. You'll need to reboot for the changes to take effect.

Now you should be able to dial up to the Internet on your gateway machine. Then run a web browser on another machine on your LAN and attempt to go to an Internet site. <http://www.gamespot.co.uk> would be a good one! If it works, you've got Internet Connection Sharing working! If it doesn't, run the Help in your start menu and search for Internet Connection Sharing - there are some troubleshooting tips in there. Remember that your other machines don't need to be running Windows 98SE but your gateway PC certainly must!

HOW DO I GET WINDOWS 98 SECOND EDITION?

Order an update CD. This presumes you've already got a copy of Windows 98. It costs £16.82 including postage and can be ordered from this web page: microsoft.com/uk/windows/win98_2nd.htm Alternatively, if you don't intend to use the Internet Connection Sharing aspect, pretty much everything in Win98SE can be downloaded by using your Windows Update feature (link up to the Internet and select it from your start bar) and selecting the Windows 98 service pack. It's a fairly hefty download though so again the CD might be a good option - especially if you need to totally reinstall your PC.



Setting the IP address on the gateway PC



EXTRA SPECIAL FORCES

Welcome to real world combat. A new genre of games has taken the charts by storm and they don't feature aliens, flash cars, heavily endowed heroines and gallon splatters of blood and guts. There are no weapon power-ups and super armour suits. Based on the experience of real Special Forces commandos and soldiers who go into action around the world they feature more than a strategy game and more strategy than an action game. Hot on the heels of Delta Force, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six and Hidden and Dangerous come games Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear, Delta Force 2, Spec Ops II and SWAT 3. We take a look at each game's individual features while a former US Special Forces personnel links to the real world. We also popers and analyses all four for authenticity...

Sometimes, and not very often, a new game genre is created. It's usually the result of new technology making something possible and its usually blindingly obvious that it should have been attempted before. 3D squad-based Special Forces games have been the new success stories of the last year and a half, with Spec Ops, Delta Force, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six and, latterly, Hidden & Dangerous taking the charts by storm.

Now the second generation of these games is on its way and we take a comparative look at four of them... Delta Force 2, Rainbow Six Rogue Spear, Spec Ops II and SWAT 3, a brand new version of Sierra's Police Quest series.

All these titles share one common gameplay element: missions based on realistic military or paramilitary commando operations at the tactical level, aimed at direct action, counter terrorism, hostage rescue, and special reconnaissance. One thing is certain – the developers have done their homework, with the level of authenticity running high. Whether it's Spec Ops II's co-op mission with the British SAS to address a Pakistani nuclear situation, or SWAT 3's terrorist takeover of the control tower at Los Angeles International, the action is gritty and authentic.

Team command and control is an important element in these games, since most operations depend on support from your computer-controlled team mates for success. Towards this end the original AI, scrapped it, and rewrote it from the ground up. The computer-controlled members navigate much more cleanly, and their combat routines have been improved. They'll duck for cover, run away, try to avoid grenades, and generally act much more human than the original AI.

Delta Force 2 and Spec Ops II also have beefed up team AI to better support you (for instance your Spec Ops team mates should wander into your line of fire any more).

All four games have refined their team command and control screens for better team response during the heat of battle. Each

approach is unique. Spec Ops II uses a single keystroke to dispatch operatives to a location, without your having to micromanage their manoeuvres. Delta Force 2 is totally overhauled and now uses a Commander's Screen and waypoints to control AI teammates.

Meanwhile Rogue Spear has streamlined its team mission screens for better planning and rule-of-engagement management. Finally, SWAT 3 lets you split your five-man element into two smaller elements to better sweep an area for bad guys.

Only Delta Force 2 won't allow you to select and move to other team operatives. SWAT 3 provides a roster of over 60 SWAT members and 12 element leaders from which to assemble your five-man team. Each operative will improve his skills from mission to mission, so success will hinge on training your key players and assembling the right team for each mission. It's the same with Spec Ops II, where you'll choose from among a machine-gunner, grenadier, sniper, rifleman, and more for your teams.

AREA ASSESSMENT

From a graphical standpoint, these games are a marked improvement in physics, lighting, and 3D environments – little wonder, with each game engine being rebuilt from scratch. Rogue Spear and SWAT 3 look really sharp (and rather similar), SWAT 3 actually having the edge with more impressive graphics and physics modeling. Sierra used over 500 motion-capture videos for very lifelike character movement and the entry and exit holes for bullets just have to be seen to be believed.

Spec Ops II's updated 'Viper' engine powers its ominous outdoor environments, 3D sounds, and outstanding lighting effects, including realistic searchlights that seek to pinpoint your position and alert the enemy. Meanwhile Delta Force 2 has improved the most, thanks to a move from a 16-bit voxel graphics engine to a new true-color, 32-bit model. Of the four, Delta Force still uses the largest outdoor environments for patrolling manoeuvres, but the new game employs indoor environments as well – for hostage rescue and reconnaissance. SWAT 3 is alone in that it doesn't include weather effects, but

then I suppose it wouldn't, given that the game takes place entirely indoors. The other games add most of their weather touches for ambience, but Delta Force 2's use of fog should help balance sniper-infested multi-player matches.

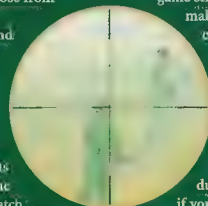
BATTLE DRILLS

The arsenals from these games are bulging with more weapons and equipment than ever before. Rogue Spear adds full sniper support with weapons like the M14, Enfield L85A1, and the big, bad, .50-caliber Barrett Model 98 sniper rifle originally seen in Delta Force. SWAT 3 uses the traditional LAPD arsenal of MP5s, CAR-15s, and M1911 pistols, while adding new technology like the Kevlar tactical helmet. Delta Force 2, on the other hand, adds unique weapons like the H&K P11 (which fires flechettes underwater), an M4 with shotgun (called the Master Key), and fixed weapon emplacements sporting immiguns. Spec Ops II adds some unique weapons like Chicoms, M270s, Steyr Augs, and some of the heavier stuff like grenade launchers and machine guns.

Picking up your team's flashlights, light sticks, binoculars, tac vests, and grenades add to the game strategy. Again Delta Force 2 makes big strides and now uses equipment slots in addition to primary weapon slots so you can choose Kevlar vests, rebreathers for underwater action, and field surveillance cameras for watching your back. Spec Ops II allows you to pick up and drop objects during the game, which is good if you run out of ammo and

an AK-47 happens to be laying nearby, but bad if you get too greedy because it can weigh you down.

Shot placement and ballistic effects are heavily emphasized in all four games. Not only do most weapons have a choice of rounds, but bullets now penetrate doors and walls (and indeed Delta Force's previously bulletproof tents). Things are increasingly complicated too with Rogue Spear handling ballistic effects by assigning modifying values to weapons, so you can't snipe with an MP5 from 200 metres without the 9mm round losing energy at point of impact. This means that you'll need to use the right weapon for the job at all times. Likewise, wound effects will force you to aim your shots more accurately. Each game actually models wounds according to their location on a character: if the hit is in the arm or leg, the character limps and leaves a trail of blood.



H-HOUR

Multiplayer is an area where these games universally shine. If you're looking for a frag-fest, look to Delta Force 2 and Spec Ops II, both of which will support giant match-ups – though cooperative action is available in both too. Both Rogue Spear and SWAT 3 are played as realistic tactical simulations, because team command and control and support are vital to mission success.

As mentioned earlier, Spec Ops II will allow you to pick up a fallen enemy's weapons and equipment, which spices up multiplayer, while Delta Force 2 is adding the option of an armoury – a room you can pop into to change weapons mid game – for its online action. This will be the only destructible building in the game – so expect to see teams leading armoury-destroying charges against their enemies.

Typing commands during battle takes too long and leaves you vulnerable, so voice support is on most multiplayer gamers' wish list. SWAT 3 and Spec Ops II have no plans to support voice right now, and hopefully Red Storm will improve the shoddy voice technology of Rainbow Six. NovaLogic has the advantage in voice technology with its VoiceOverNet, already working well on its NovaWorld internet servers, but it's not the ideal solution as it allows communication with only one player at a time rather than your entire team.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Without a doubt, all four of these simulations are looking sharper and more immersive than their originals, and at this point there seems to be no clear victor emerging from the trenches. And you never know, there might be another Hidden & Dangerous waiting in the wings to supply a WWII angle on the genre again. At the moment though I'd bet a few weekend passes to Vienna that Rogue Spear follows in Rainbow Six's footsteps as the benchmark tactical game of this new crop, while Delta Force 2 will come in as a more open, action orientated favourite. When SWAT 3's multiplayer feature gets released several months after the single player version the game should be a heavy-duty combatant due to its realistic environments and CQB combat. So this leaves Spec Ops II as the underdog of the bunch, having to fight its way out of the bad reputation earned by its lackluster predecessor. However, don't count this game out. Its interface and AI upgrades are a huge improvement, and it's the only game that can be realistically played from an external 3D view. Whichever way the bullets fall, we're in for a real treat in the next six months.

Raphael Libertore

(Retired US Army Special Forces operative)

SWAT 3: CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

SWAT 3: Close Quarters Battle is the latest

Sierra Studios' Police Quest: SWAT adventure series. Based on real-life SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics, in case you don't follow telly) missions

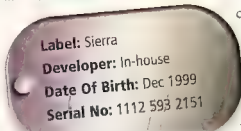
of the Los Angeles Police Department, but set in the year 2005, the game casts you as the leader of a five-man team in either career or single-player modes. In career mode you will choose your team from a list of 60 available officers with various skills. SWAT 3's dynamic missions focus on high-intensity close-quarters combat instead of the puzzle-solving of its predecessors – the developers have obviously taken a leaf out of Rainbow Six's book.

In-game surroundings are very interactive with operable light switches, light shadows,

reflective mirrors and walls that can be shot through. You will be able to track enemies using footprints and blood drips. You will use the standard equipment available to the LAPD which includes the Heckler

& Koch MP5 complete with operating torch, the M4 assault rifle, Benelli shotgun and the Colt .45, again mounted with a torch. Other weapons you'll come across (usually as you're under fire from them) will be the AK47 (there's a surprise), the Czech Skorpion and the infamous Glock – tailor-made for terrorist types.

In order to get things right most of the game's development team has trained with the LAPD SWAT and the resulting tactical realism is apparent, for example, in the way your team systematically sweeps an area for suspects.



Above: The LAPD execute a dancing terrorist. Below left: Always bring your toupee to a gunfight



DELTA FORCE 2

NovaLogic is rigidly sticking to its voxel engine for this game and why not, the resolution has gone up to 32-bit and although it is still the most forgiving of PCs without 3D acceleration in lo-lo res, if you have the right machine and you can take it up to 800x600 it's certainly something to behold. Creeping through long grass makes the game even more tactical than before while pre-rendered bushes and trees make the landscape a heap more realistic. At high resolution ground and close-up object detail has been tightened up as well as effects like explosions and bullet bursts.

A definite advantage of the voxel engine is that it enables long distance vistas and the terrain looks rich and realistic with new lighting and shading effects that change as you move. Water has been drastically improved over the first game and swimming is a tad more realistic too, partially due to the inclusion of a breathing device that means you can't stay under the water indefinitely. News just in is that Delta Force 2 is going to incorporate an air drop delivery for your troops on some levels, giving you a birds-eye view of the landscape rather than just joining the game in the LZ. Levels have been made even bigger, allowing for much more exploration and planning.

On the subject of planning, there is now an element of control over the support teams – rather than just activating them by passing waypoints yourself you can give the teams orders, set up their (and your) waypoints before the game commences and also change these waypoints during a game.

There will be rather more interaction with your surroundings too, with more vehicles moving about (some will shoot at you for a change too) including some serious armour, like Soviet T80s, and the missions will feature many more interior assaults. Walls, windows, doors and other surfaces can now be penetrated depending on the weapon you are using. Obviously a silenced .22 pistol will not have the same penetrative power as a Barrett light fifty! The vehicles not only look more realistic, they act more realistically too and will move at speed. Opposing foot soldiers also walk and run at the right pace – and the number of animations used has been increased to give them a more genuine feel. Where would a war game be without death animations and Delta Force 2 has a wide variety of them, including ones for injuries to

specific parts of the body.

Sound-wise the poor enemy soldiers have an increased vocabulary of exclamations

while much greater accuracy can be expected in pinpointing fire. This is necessary because fog has been extensively implemented not only in the multiplayer game (where it is most welcome as cover from trigger-happy snipers), but also in the single-player game which means a lot more close quarters fighting. It is very eerie playing in a foggy valley with bullets whistling all around you and your own M16 echoing off the sides of the surrounding hills.

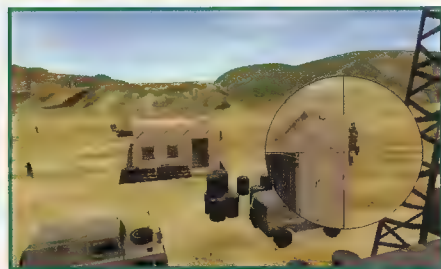
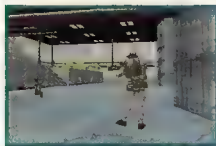
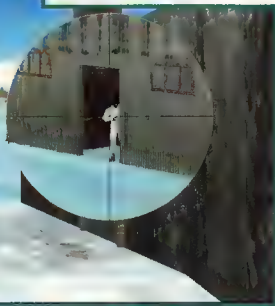
Multiplayer Delta Force 2 will allow up to 32 players to join in a co-operative mission – that's an entire platoon – while NovaLogic is touting a possible 120 players per game in online battles. The issue of whether multiplayer will be Novaworld based only, or whether it will include support for null modem and IPX LAN play has not been resolved as yet, but rumour has it that NovaLogic might be backtracking on its original Novaworld-only decision.

Delta Force 2 will have in the region of 50 single-player missions divided, like the first game, into several campaigns.

Label: NovaLogic
Developer: In-house
Date Of Birth: Feb 2000
Serial No: 2001 001 2233



Above: Long grass now aids stealth. Top: You now have complete control over your squadmates' waypoints, so you can fan out at your own pace. Centre: There is a lot more interior action in Delta Force 2. Vehicles are more realistic and bullets can shoot through thin walls and tent canvas



RAINBOW SIX ROGUE SPEAR

What set Rainbow Six apart from the throng of first-person shooters crowding the market? Red Storm would say it was the realistic combat model. After

playing a beta version of Rogue Spear, the sequel to Rainbow Six, we can report that the combat model is still the strong point. Rogue Spear's refinements over the original include improved artificial intelligence, better graphics and sound, realistic ballistic effects, an improved interface, and an observer mode.

Not only do computer-controlled team members move and support your actions with more effect, but nearby terrorists actively seek you out during a raging battle. Enemies' vocals have also been improved with a wider variety of responses and exclamations. Add some really awesome ballistic and wound effects, like shooting through windows and doors, or taking a round in the leg that will leave a trail of blood, and it's clear that Rogue Spear is on track to becoming a more true-to-life game.

The game now allows you to move while crouched, which adds an extra element of stealth and protection, and it's needed considering the impressive response speed of opposing terrorists. You will also be able to peer around corners, exposing as little of your body as possible for the shortest possible amount of time.

While some members of the Rainbow Six roster are familiar from the first game they all now have an additional sniping skill (losing the original Teamwork and Firearms skills in the process) which makes certain individuals invaluable in cover situations – if you equip them with the right weapon. Special planning and action phases are being implemented for snipers. Orders included with go codes in the waypointing phase include Snipe, Cover and Defend and an Infiltrate Mode is also included for following waypoints.

Weapons added in the game include an unusual bullpup design sniper rifle from Walther, the WA 2000, and both the British Army's L85A1 Enfield and the weird-looking Steyr Assault Rifle. The Benelli shotgun has been joined by the evil-looking SPAS-12, a Hollywood favourite. The venerable M14 also makes an appearance alongside a .45 version of the standard Heckler & Koch sub machine gun. Hand guns now available include a lunatic .50 calibre version of the Israeli Desert eagle.

Overall, the planning and setup phase is easier to follow than in Rainbow Six, with new menus providing a less drab look – though it's

still likely to be daunting for first timers. The 3D representation on the map screen is much more like what you'll actually see in the game itself, and gives you some visual clues about areas you will be entering. The main interface has not

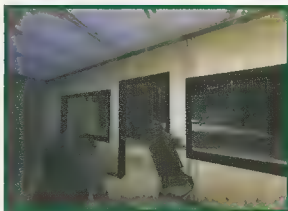
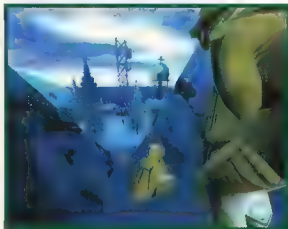
changed significantly in terms of the information it tells you, only in the way it presents it. Overall everything seems to happen faster and more efficiently in Rogue Spear – and this is both good news and lethal news.

Label: Red Storm

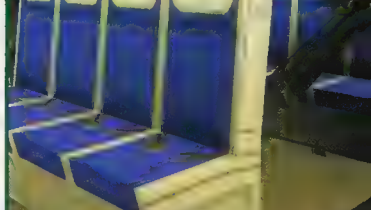
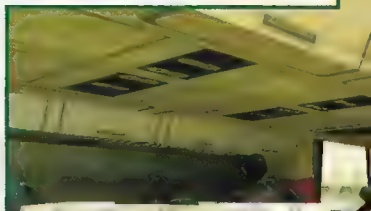
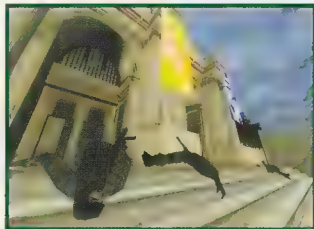
Developer: In-house

Date Of Birth: Nov 1999

Serial No: 1264 349 3215



Top: Larger levels and weather effects are part of the update. **Top right:** The Proms? **Centre:** Not the result we wanted. **Above:** Red Storm has mastered interior combat. **Right:** Duty Free is now illegal within the EU. **You will be shot**



SPEC OPS II

According to Mark Long, head honcho of Spec Ops developer Zombie, 'We want players to feel like they're actually Green Berets.' Towards that end, Zombie has completely rebuilt its Spec Ops Viper engine while adding a fluid in-game control for a more dynamic team-oriented combat experience. There are over 30 real-life special-forces missions stressing Green Beret teamwork for direct action, special reconnaissance, and hostage rescue operations.

Spec Ops II follows its predecessor in using teams of two and three members to enhance gameplay, even though a US Army Special Forces 'A' team actually has 12 men. The simulated men do, however, train and fight like real Green Berets, with obstacle courses modeled after real Army training courses, and their skill development in weapons, demolitions, recon, and sniper tactics shadow the real thing.

The new engine takes the game up to resolutions of 1024x768 with dynamic lighting that will include operational search lights and usable flashlights. Like Delta

Force 2, Spec Ops II is going for much more interior action as well as exteriors, and lots of areas are texture mapped from pictures of the real thing.

Speaking of real things,

Zombie has been out on the firing range sampling M4s and AK47s so you get an accurate sound when you fire one (or have one fired at you), while it has motion captured real US Green Berets (and not just their hats either) to get an authentic feel for movement.

Locations will include Thailand, North Korea, Pakistan, Germany and the Antarctic and the graphical representation of the surroundings in each zone looks good from what we've seen.

Label: Take 2

Developer: Zombie

Date Of Birth: Winter 1999

Serial No: 9515 224 7633



Look after your buddies in Spec Ops II, you need their support firepower



A DAY IN THE LIFE

The line between Technology Heaven and Hardware Hell

You may think that a game hardware reviewer's life is non-stop parties and helping supermodels optimize their gaming rigs, but the reality tells a different tale. This month we give you a peek behind the closed door of columnist stardom, and show you a typical day on the never-ending quest for the best gaming hardware out there. Of course, all names, genders, companies and entire industries have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent, the guilty-as-hell, and, most of all, me.

With my wife and kids out and about starting their day, the house had suddenly grown quiet. It's the eye of the hurricane, I reflect, as I fill an oversized mug with coffee, lace it with cream and sugar, and head downstairs to my lair. The coffee is much needed, as I had been up pretty late running benchmarks.

Four power switches turn everything on: One for the network hubs, two for my production system, and one for the Pentium II testbed, which serves double duty as my server. I sit back, suck down some caffeine, and watch the SCSI adapter initialise its BIOS. Ah....

TESTING, TESTING

There are three more graphics cards to run through the testbed in yet another big graphics card roundup. It used to be that the magazine only had to test one batch of 3D accelerators once a year, but now it's up to three. I check the manufacturer's web site for a new driver, but there's none, so I install the latest driver from the product setup CD. Five minutes and one reboot later, WinBench 99's Business Graphics WinMark test is zipping along.

While WinBench is running, I check my email - 39 messages have arrived since 11 o'clock last night. I sigh and begin wading through the mail. Many of the letters are from readers seeking some kind of technical help. I answer a few, and file away a few more for my new column. It's a sad statement about product support that people are reduced to emailing a magazine editor for answers.

I check the testbed. WinBench is finished. I change the colour depth, reboot, fire up 3D WinBench, and launch the quality tests.

It looks really cool and very expensive.

I'm momentarily glad I get stuff like this on loan.

SO MUCH FOR SERENITY

The phone rings, shattering my contemplative repose. It's a marketing bloke for a small maker of PC speakers. He asks me, "Have you received the speakers you requested for review?"

We're off to a bad start. This marketing bloke is the type that gives his profession a bad name. He had been very pushy about sending the speakers, so I'd reluctantly given in. The speakers were small, electric blue, and terrible. I feel my annoyance meter creeping up into the red. "They're up and running now," I say, keeping my tone noncommittal.

"Great," the guy gushes on. "Can we get a quote?"

I unscrew the phone receiver from my ear and stare at it incredulously, then put it back to my ear. "Excuse me?" I say.

"A quote. We'd like a positive quote from you, something we can put on the side of the box."

Again, I stare at the phone. Several choice phrases flash through my head, but I muster some semblance of tact and inform this clown that I'm not in the business of generating quotes, and certainly not in the business of uncritically endorsing products.

"But I've seen your stuff quoted," he whines.

"What you see are snippets from reviews that companies quote. I have no control over that, and I don't write reviews with the intent of getting quoted. Now, I have some deadlines, so I've got to go."

I hang up the phone. The day is off to an inauspicious start.

MAIL CALL

The doorbell rings. I bounce up the stairs and open the door. It's the FedEx guy with two boxes for me. One is huge, and contains a PC system. "I'll get the other one," he says, as I sign for them. He goes back to his truck, drags something out, and staggers up the steps. The box is smaller than the PC box, but heavier. "Here," he gasps.

I take the boxes downstairs. The mysterious, heavy box contains a complete flight control panel and yoke. It looks really cool and very expensive. I'm momentarily glad I get stuff like this on loan.

I check the testbed to find 3D WinBench has halted; the refresh rate doesn't match. I swear and change the setting to 100Hz.

While the 3D WinMark test runs, I fire up the Killer Rig and install the mini-cockpit. I discover that it's USB, and smile. Five minutes later, I'm airborne in a P-38 dishing out Allied justice. Then I surface, jot a few notes for a future review, check the testbed, and record benchmark results.

I start some of the game tests, and hope to return to my P-38 for a while. But sure enough, the 3D card being tested is showing corrupted textures. So, I fire off an email to the product manager who had been promising new drivers.

The doorbell rings again. It's my daughters, back already. I look at my watch: it's 4:30. They had left over eight hours ago. I realize that I've forgotten to eat lunch. I smile at them.

"Want a snack?"

GAME OVER?



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AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

Commercial RPGs need more depth, involvement, and complexity – like freeware!

There's a lot of 'em about. Roleplaying games, that is. There's Baldur's Gate. Might & Magic. Diablo. Even, to an extent, Outcast and Dungeon Keeper. You get the idea.

The thing is, enjoyable as they are, they're all missing something. They're not quite what I'm looking for in a roleplaying game. They don't have the depth I'm looking for – both depth of involvement and depth of gameplay – complexity, if you prefer, in terms of the emotional variety of the game world.

Yet there's a whole other kind of computer-based roleplaying game that does have what I want. I'm talking about a kind of roleplaying game that seems like it's been around forever. A kind that's written for fun and given away for free. You guessed it – freeware.

What is a roleplaying game? If we can work that out then maybe it'll shed some light on just what it is that's missing from many of the commercial games.

Clearly, if you're playing a roleplaying game then you're looking to play a role in the game. But there are many games in which you play roles – Tomb Raider, Jedi Knight, MDK. So maybe it's to do with solving problems and overcoming adversity on your way to some final goal. And yet, in this case, I think we'd want to rule-out straight adventure games, like Grim Fandango – a good game, but lead character Manny isn't a role in this sense, more of a human-controlled character. Not unlike Lara Croft, though with better dress sense.



System Shock 2 – state of the art as far as commercial RPGs are concerned

So the key to what makes a true roleplaying game is that the role you play in the game is more than just an extension of your mouse or keyboard – it's a part of you! It's not uncommon for roleplayers to immerse themselves so thoroughly in their in-game persona that they experience a genuine sense of loss when bad things begin to happen.

When you play Tomb Raider, do you feel like you are Lara Croft? Or just that you're *controlling* her? In Carmageddon, do you become Max, or do you just stay as you, and drive like a maniac? That's what I mean by emotional depth.

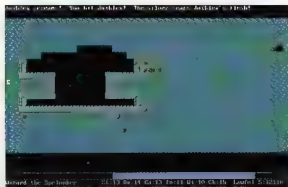
As for complexity within the game world –

how limited do you feel when you play Grim Fandango? In Baldur's Gate, do you ever feel like killing off your allies and stealing their treasures, rather than bartering for them? This is the disappointing depth of gameplay.

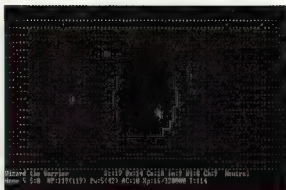
One final thing which marks off roleplaying games from other genres is the exact role you choose to adopt, and that your style of gameplay with that character will significantly affect events in the game. And not just in small ways, either. However you choose to play the game – as an elf or a human, as a friendly character or a nasty one – influences the game without dead-ending it.

There's no ultimate penalty for slaughtering friends and befriending enemies – some styles might be easier than others, but each one is winnable. And every new game is a new experience. But it's this last part that highlights problems...

Although commercial roleplaying games continue to grow in popularity, there's still a slew of freeware roleplaying games available. The most complex – and to my mind the most enjoyable – is Nethack. But there are plenty of others out there, freely available for downloading and playing (see History of



The new 'stranger' Nethack game, Slash 'Em



Nethack: complexity at its core

freeware roleplaying games). The major differences between, say, Nethack and the commercial offerings like Baldur's Gate, aside from the graphics (see Graphics & Sound), lie with the range of options available to the player.

Commercial games tend to go for a fairly linear approach, with characters progressing along a pre-defined path towards a specific goal. Chapter-like gameplay, if you will, in a pre-defined game world. In Baldur's Gate, for example, a lot of the game involves your being asked by someone to go and get an object or perform an action for them. Until you do what you're told, the game cannot progress.

In contrast, Nethack's world is freshly generated with every game, and each game you play tends to be driven more by you. There are some things you need to do to complete the game – there's a quest to complete along the way (each class has its own quest), but the order in which you choose to do things is entirely up to you.

Much of the game is optional. There are things you can do to make life easier, but you don't have to do them, and even if you try to, say, steal the Gnome King's gems or loot Croesus's treasury, there are no restrictions on how you do it. The number of ways you can interact with objects and creatures in Nethack is very large. Any creature may be attacked (physically or magically, or a mixture of the two), talked to, bribed, coerced, tamed, polymorphed into another form, rescued from a trap, and so on. Magic is far richer in the freeware games than in their commercial counterparts. Nethack provides you with scrolls, potions, wands, spellbooks, magical items and dozens of magical artifacts. Theology is also prominent, with real gods who get angry but can be generous, even helpful, should you choose to pray to them when you're in trouble.

Other small touches add to the richness of the experience. Breaking a mirror, for example, materially affects your luck in the game. This, in turn, can affect the kinds of items you might come across at random, the behaviour of monsters towards you, and major features, such as weapons skills, where you can become more proficient with a weapon as you make more use of it.

Until commercial games manage to reproduce, and perhaps even expanded, the range of creatures and objects and behaviours provided by freeware roleplaying games, I think I'll stick with Nethack. After all, I've been playing this game for 15 years now. Will Baldur's Gate last as long?

Roy Stead

HISTORY OF FREWARE RPGS



The original graphical adventure game was called Rogue (www.win.tue.nl/games/roguelike/rogue/index.html), and it was written by Michael Toy and Glenn Wichman in about 1980, originally for Unix machines. Later, a more complex game was devised by, among others, Jay Fenaison. That game was called Hack. Because its character-based graphics and user interface were derived from Rogue, Hack – along with its variants and descendants – is known as a Rogue-like game.

A couple of years down the line, the Internet came along, allowing programmers from around the world to collaborate, under the direction of Mike Stephenson, on a souped-up

version of Hack, which today is probably among the most complex and involving computer games ever devised. Since the Internet played such a large part in its creation, this game was named Nethack (check out www.come.to/nethack/).

While Nethack was in development, other people were producing Rogue-like games too, of which Moria

(www.math.lsa.umich.edu/~grabiner/moria.html) is probably the best known. This development is still going on.

As I write, Nethack is evolving into an even more engrossing – not to say strange – roleplaying game, called Slash 'Em (which stands for Super-Lotsa-Added-Stuff-Hack with Extra-Magic, and can be downloaded from www.geocities.com/CollegePark/2458/index.html).

Independently, yet another Rogue-like game, ADOM (Ancient Domains Of Mystery, available from www.aleph-null.com/adom/index.html) is gradually piecing itself together, with some assistance from Thomas Biskup.

GRAPHICS & SOUND

Commercial roleplaying games clearly have the edge over their freeware kin when it comes to graphics. While freeware roleplaying games tend to be stuck in a land drawn up using ASCII characters – though with graphical tiles replacing the ASCII in the newer ones – commercial roleplaying games have branched out into all-singing, all-dancing (and all-killing) three dimensional graphics. But is that a good thing? Absolutely. The images you see when you play, say, in Baldur's Gate or Diablo are beautiful. And the sounds you hear – strangely accented speech and atmospheric music and sound effects – add to the feeling of 'being there'. Yet animation, sadly, is inherently limiting. If you have an object which can be manipulated in a dozen different ways then each one needs to be drawn out by a graphic artist. And the same for every object in the game. Similarly, if there are hundreds of different types of monster – each one with specialised ways of behaviour and ways of attacking you – then every one has to be animated. Inevitably, either the graphics

become very generic – which makes the game 'samey' – or your actions are limited by what the games developer chose to animate. Which takes away from the gameplay. In this case, you really do take on the old cliché: pay your money, and make your choice. Go for freeware for gameplay without so many pretty pictures; or pay out for commercial games and get pretty pictures without so much choice of gameplay. When will the time come when gamers can choose whether they want to fight a demon, lord or have a chat with him. To bribe him to leave you alone, or to join him and become a demon yourself. And, if you fight him, to have him react differently according to which spells, out of dozens, or which weapons, chosen from hundreds, you decide to use. Or maybe you'd prefer to enchant him, make him obey you, tame a pack of dogs or a few dragons and have them go after him instead? The point is, all these actions – along with many others – are available to you in the freeware, Nethack. How many would be available if every one had to be animated in 3D?

SMALL TIPS

See what makes each race tick, from Prima's official

KINGPIN



If you're not playing Kingpin in god-mode, the secret to survival is having some friends willing to take a bullet for you. The crowbar vendor in the opening scene is the first sucker you can hire, and while he has no chance against the gun-toting thugs by the stairs, he'll increase your chances of getting through the encounter alive. After that, you'll find most of your friends in bars. Hire all you can – it's by far the best use of your cash.

Start the game with the command line "+developer 1" (ie "c:\Kingpin\kingpin.exe +developer 1"). Then use the ~ (tilde) key to bring down the console during the game and type the following codes:

CODE	EFFECT
IMMORTAL	God-mode
NOCLIP	No-clipping mode

Use the following commands with the GIVE variable (ie GIVE ALL, GIVE CASH, etc):

CODE	EFFECT
ALL	Gives you all items (except cash)
CASH ###	Gives you ### dollars

F22 LIGHTNING

While playing, press [ctrl]+[enter], enter any of the following (all in lower-case letters), then press [enter] after each one:

CODE	EFFECT
black oil	Refuel
fight the future	Replenish ammo
ghostpit	Invisible plane
i want to believe	No crashes
the truth is out there	Unlimited ammo
this isn't	
happening	Repair damage
trust no one	God mode

MS BASEBALL

To access bonus teams, click on Help then About... When the developer's splash screen appears, right-click twice on the word "Wizbang" on the second line of the copyright statement. Bonus teams include Robots, Microsoft and Wizbang.



REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL

Press [enter] for console, then enter one of the following:

csmlton	Enable cheats
csywhw	God-mode
csstigmata	All guns, ammo, health, essence, angelic powers
csrosary	All angelic powers
cshealth	Full health
csshroud	Full armour
csessence	Full essence
csitems	All items
csguns	All guns
csammo	Ammunition
csghost	No gravity (flight mode)
cswire	Wireframe level map
csahlt	Stops time
csvanish	Kills all enemies

Press [esc] during play and select Options. Click the lower left corner and enter one of the following codes to activate the cheat function.

EGOTRIP	Big enemy heads
BEEFCAKE	Invincibility
SWEET	All weapons with unlimited ammo

Press the "-" key to bring up the console, then type in these codes for the desired effect:

lwllsurvive	God-mode
Raindropskeepfallinonmyhead	Call for artillery strike (5 shots)
Takeittothelimit	Unlimited ammo
Closetoyou	Enemies do not see you
Letme go	Level selection

MIDTOWN MADNESS



Enter the following as your player name to unlock the respective cheat:

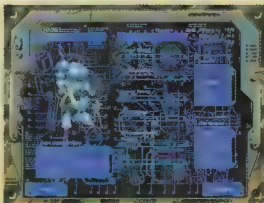
CODE	EFFECT
Showme Cops	Police displayed on the map
Big Bus Party	All city bus traffic
Tiny Car	All compact car traffic
Jet Planes	All airplane traffic
vaccompact	Select the VW Bug in cruise mode to drive a VW Rabbit
vavan	Select the Ford F350 in cruise mode to drive a van
valimo	Select the Ford Mustang GT in cruise mode to drive a limo
vataxi	Select the Cadillac in cruise mode to drive a yellow cab
vaboeing_small	Select the City Bus in cruise mode to drive a mini-jet

HEAVY GEAR II

If there is one thing that affects Gear power more than anything else, it's fire control. When modifying your Gear, always try to get a Fire Control rating of at least two, or even higher if you can get the Threat Value low enough. One way of doing this is to only take light weapons that fire rapidly and carry lots of ammo (such as autocannons). Fire Control not only gives you valuable targeting information, but it also enhances the damage your weapons inflict. A Gear with a Fire Control rating of three with only a medium autocannon is significantly more lethal than a Gear with a Fire Control rating of zero or one who is equipped with heavy bazookas, guided mortars, and so on.

If being a Black Talon is still too much for you, then you might consider cheating outright. First, bring up the console by pressing the ~ (tilde) key, then type either one of these codes to achieve the desired effect.

CODE	EFFECT
set camtl	God-mode
set mission	Auto-complete mission



NHL 99



Enter these codes during the game:

CODE	EFFECT
MANTIS	Gives players elongated arms, legs and necks
NHLKIDS	Makes players kid-size
HOMEGOAL	Gives home team a goal
AWAYGOAL	Gives away team a goal
PENALTY	Causes a penalty
INJURY	Causes an injury
ZAMBO	Puts the zamboni on the ice
VICTORY	Starts fireworks over the rink
FLASH	Camera flashes from the stands
SPOTS	Turns on the pre-game spotlights
CHECK	Every player automatically body checks an opposing player to the ice upon contact
GRAB	Similar to CHECK but with a stick hold instead

NFL BLITZ

On the Versus screen, press Turbo, Jump, and Pass to change the respective icons below the helmets. The numbers in the following list indicate the number of times each button is pressed and the direction in which the d-pad must be pressed to activate the code.

CODE	EFFECT
2-5-0 Left	Fast passes
1-2-3 Left	Super field goals
5-0-0 Left	Turn off stadium
2-1-0 Up	No first downs
3-4-4 Up	No Interceptions
1-5-1 Up	No punting
4-3-3 Up	Invisible
5-1-4 Up	Infinite turbo
0-4-5 Up	Super blitzing
2-3-3 Up	Power-up teammates
3-1-2 Up	Power-up offense
4-2-1 Up	Power-up defense
0-3-0 Down	Fog on
0-4-1 Down	Thick fog on
2-2-3 Right	Unlimited throw distances
0-5-0 Right	Big football
3-1-0 Right	Team tiny players
1-4-1 Right	Team big players
2-0-3 Right	Team big head
4-0-4 Left	Power-up speed
4-2-3 Right	Super passing
2-2-2 Right	Night game
0-3-2 Left	Fast turbo running
3-2-1 Left	No head
1-2-3 Right	Headless team

OPEN LETTER TO ID SOFTWARE

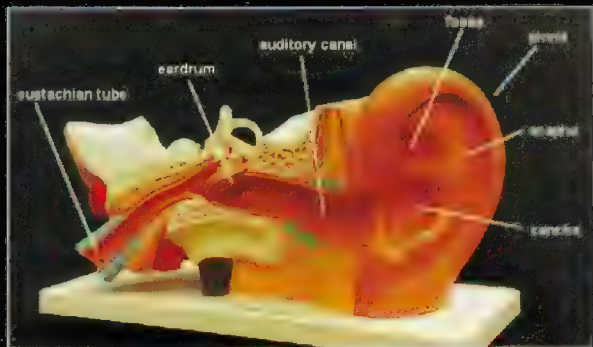
Dear John Carmack and Friends,

I've been a fan of your games since Doom, clichéd as it sounds. They were superb 3D games in their own right, pushing back the barriers of the genre and the technology to support it. However they were, and are to this day, much more than that. They are a way of life when it comes to the multiplayer online scene. Therefore I feel I must write to you to request a feature that I have missed since Quake II, let alone your upcoming Quake 3 Arena. It is nothing to do with game-play, graphics or any of the other elements that you must be hounded about by fans daily. It is, by contrast, a very simple thing to add but it will mean so much for our experience of the game.

I'm talking about 3D audio support. While consumer awareness of this technology is not at the same level as graphics technology, I believe it crucially adds to the so-called 'immersive' experience in much the same way as dynamic lighting and other sophisticated graphics techniques pioneered by your game engines. What's more, there's almost no audio hardware sold today that does not support 3D techniques and thankfully there are no driver problems to overcome either.

While it's true that from headphone and twin-speaker set-ups, many don't experience convincing 3D audio on the first listen. This is dismissing the effect too early. Consider this: an experienced player hears a weapon pick-up sound while playing Quake. They can pinpoint the sound location based on experience, knowledge of the level and stereo sound alone. Of course sometimes it requires the player turning so as to get a panning fix on the source of the sound but that's what you have to do with vanilla stereo.

On the other hand, with a bit of in-game training, 3D audio has the capability to go much further than this. The ear-models used to create the algorithms, that 'shape' the sound as if it has passed through a real ear, differs from the player's own unique ears. However the brain soon adjusts with a bit of training by



The advanced audio sensory apparatus of an experienced gamer

visually seeing the position of players and associating that with the 3D audio they are hearing. Before too long, the player can not only pick up locations of players based on sounds they'd expect from known weapons and ammo pick-ups but they'll be able to get a fix on the environment in all directions.

Is there a firefight around that corner or is it happening a level below? Our 3D audio equipped hero can tell. Imagine the fright as a player walking stealthily behind suddenly tries to rush our hero - footsteps giving him away at the last moment. Without needing to get a visual lock on rockets in a busy firefight, the player can get some feel for where they are headed without having to swing about like a paranoid drug dealer. Am I being shot at from behind, or is it flying high? Audio cues, unlike visual information, flood the player from all angles and not just the 90 degrees of vision to the front. Is it not fair to let the ante on the rest of the 270 degrees also?

One can only point to the excellent example of Half-Life providing clues of where 3D audio can go. That said, I would not insist that the effort of A3D 2.0 is essential, the extensive work required to support sending of room

dimensions and audio properties into the sound system is limited to one type brand of 3D audio card. However at least 3D positional audio for the sounds (if not the room ambience) is something that benefits this example game greatly. The first time I heard a freshly ejected shotgun shell bouncing to the side and behind my position sent shivers up my spine.

In the final analysis, the beauty of 3D audio is in its simplicity. A good convincing effect can be had with no cluttered muddy ambience for the minimum of effort. The quality of the 3D effect can then be decided by the player's hardware. Starting off with bare bones Aureal 1-based Diamond S90 (about £20), through to a regular Sound Blaster Live in the middle. Even up to an ESS Canyon 3D based card such as a Terratec DMX sounding best of all. It seems a shame that there's so much hardware that sounds so good with so many games that you chaps at id won't support it for your hotly anticipated Quake III Arena.

I ask you to reconsider so Quake III's aural experience is up to the visual splendour we expect.

Yours
Mat 'The Lurker' Bettinson

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HANDS ON!

GTA 2

Grand Theft Auto 2 is nearly there – we test the latest Beta and find out if it's gun crazy all over again

REVIEWS

SIMULATIONS

Flight Unlimited III leads the way alongside a squadron of add-ons

ACTION

A festival of fast-paced fun with Driver, Unreal Tournament and Drakan

STRATEGY

Homeworld and Star Trek: Starfleet Academy lead the way in real-time space strategy

SPORTS

The best from across the pond including MS Basketball 2000 and John Madden Football

ADVENTURE & ROLEPLAYING

System Shock 2 takes the genre by storm with an all-out space action fest
CLASSICS, PUZZLES & KIDS
Barbie makes a triumphant return in this month's kids oriented section

REVIEWED

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A HANDS ON PLAYTEST?

Because games development and publishing is an imprecise science we are often asked to review a game from an early, unfinished version – which is against our reviews policy. Also, because we are a monthly magazine we occasionally find ourselves in a position where we do not get a reviewable version of a game in time to do it justice. While other magazines may be happy to fob you off with a quick review of beta software we will give you our initial impressions in the Hands On Playtest section and provide a review when the software is finally ready.

PCGW RATING SYSTEM

★★★★★

Classic. A rare, near perfect game. The graphics, sound and gameplay together form a Transcendent Gaming Experience! Our strongest buying recommendation

★★★★

Very Good. A high quality game that succeeds in most areas. Well worth your money if you're interested in the subject matter or the genre

★★★

Good. Generally a good gaming experience. May exhibit imperfections, but still generally a successful development

★★

Average. A game with problems – usually lacking in gameplay or suffering from ill-conceived game design.

★

Poor. A game that gets it all wrong. Avoid!

HOW DO WE CLASSIFY GAMES?

ACTION

The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasising fast play or combat over story or strategy. Arcade-style driving, space or flying games are also included here

ADVENTURE & ROLEPLAYING

Adventures include games where you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving takes precedence over combat. RPGs are a sub-set of adventures, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes

CLASSICS, PUZZLES & KIDS

Classics are old standbys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of games – examples include backgammon, chess and bridge. Puzzle games emphasise spatial relationships, word games and/or problem solving. Kids' games are self-explanatory

GTA2

Oh yes, time for violence on the streets again

Grand Theft Auto was one of the very biggest hits of the past two years. To date you, the gaming public, have bought 130,000 copies of this game – so who said crime doesn't pay? GTA was and is violent, profane, seedy and, of course, immense fun. The original game was launched in the glare of deliberately negative publicity courted by uber-PR Max Clifford, but the controversy soon died away when people realised that it wasn't a Carmageddon, inner-face, graphic blood and guts fest. GTA looks more like games of old, with a simple top-down view and tiny characters that don't splatter. Much.

GTA 2 follows this established form, with polished-up, top-town graphics, some fine effects and a more 3D-oriented environment. It's also more violent, profane and

seedy than ever. Because of the graphic interface most people would not compare it to a game like Kingpin, but as far as background story and game progression go, GTA 2 makes Kingpin look like a sissy.

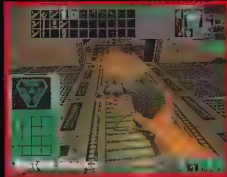
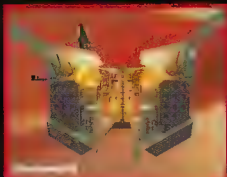
Rather than being based on real US cities like the original GTA, or London, like the add-on pack offered recently, GTA 2 is based on an imaginary city of the near future. That's not to say that you're going to get futuristic floating cars, though. GTA 2 takes its auto inspiration from the past with retro-looking vehicles that seem to be heavily inspired by designs from the 1940s-1970s. Unlike previous versions of the game, you won't be able to precisely pinpoint what they are. This is a potential downer from my point of view, because I rather fancied driving around in Minis and Vipers. There is a large choice of vehicles on



There is a larger 3D element to GTA2

offer, though, with a wide performance range. These include slow-ish Buick lookalikes and fast Merc-alikes and cars that may or may not be 1970s Beemers. While Hot Dog and Ice Cream vans add a zany touch to the game. You can also hijack public service vehicles like Fire Engines and Ambulances.

Vehicles are more interactive in GTA 2 – buses and taxis take passengers, and if you nick one and pull up at a traffic light, someone might just hop on board. Some crazy driving usually ensues, followed by a fast exit by your passengers. Some drivers will defend themselves, and if you don't get away quick enough after pulling them from the car, they might come after you. Likewise, there are lots of other computer AI car thieves who will potentially



& PLAYTESTED

SPORT

A broad genre that includes all manner of sports titles, including both action-oriented and strategy-based releases

SIMULATION

Realistic games, usually played from a first-person perspective; you may drive a realistically simulated car, fly an aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or swoop through a detailed science-fiction environment

STRATEGY & WARGAMING

Strategy games involve problem-solving and both short- and long-term planning. These titles almost always emphasise resource management and risk assessment. Wargames are a sub-set of strategy games which recreate historical conflicts or create fictional ones to be played from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational or strategic, turn-based or real-time

WHAT DOES THE SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS BOX DO?

AGE RATING

The age suitability of the software (either ELSA or BBFC classification)

MULTIPLAYER

The multiplayer options supported by the game: LAN, Internet etc

MINIMUM PC

Shows the operating systems supported by the game, the minimum processor speed recommended by the publisher, such as a P300 or PII-266, the minimum system memory required to run the game and the minimum speed CD drive required

WE RECOMMEND

Of the minimum PC specification recommended by the game publisher is different from our experience when reviewing the game. Here is the minimum spec we recommend

CONTROL

Shows devices available for use to play the game - Le mouse, keyboard, joystick or joystick

SUPPORT

Shows any additional support offered: graphics, sound or other specialist support. Such as D3D, MMX or 3Dfx graphics, Force Feedback, or D3D or Aureal 3D sound

WHAT IS OUR REVIEWS POLICY?

We review software that is either available to buy or will be available to buy during the month this magazine is on sale. We believe the reader is best served by content which reflects currently-releasing titles - and not by so-called exclusive reviews of semi-finished products, set to appear often months after the review's publication.

IMPARTIAL REVIEWS The publishers of PC Gaming World (Ziff Davis) are recognised the world over for the authority, accuracy and impartiality of their reviews. This will not be compromised.

ALL GAMES ARE EQUAL AT THE START There is no favouritism for big-name publishers. A good game is a good game - whoever develops it. We will never trade a high score for an 'exclusive' review. Our verdicts and scores are sacrosanct.

THE MOST EXPERIENCED TEAM We continue to develop the most experienced and authoritative panel of reviewers anywhere in the UK. Our current editorial team includes gaming experience averaging over eight years, and extends back as far as the Commodore PET.

MORE REVIEWS Our goal is to review every new PC game released within a month, or earlier, of our publication date.

SPECIALIST REVIEWERS We divide the magazine into genres so you can enjoy reviews by specialists. We always get flight sim fans to review flight sims, Quake fans to review Quake packs...



After blowing up a SWAT team van and a few cop cars I'm not very popular

hijack your precious mount.

The city in which GTA 2 is set is on the edge of anarchy - and it shows. You can be running peacefully down the street, looking for someone to murder, when you suddenly get mugged indiscriminately. The city is run by three rival gangs known as the Zibatzu, The Loonies and the Yakuza. These gangs hate each other's guts and have turned the city into a living nightmare in their individual quests for power. On

the other side of the fence, law and order is represented by the cops (and their SWAT cousins), the FBI and, when you're really bad, the army. Cops here seem much the same as they were in GTA, lolling around in their cars (which aren't terribly attractive to my mind - a bit like London Taxis) looking for trouble. When you create a rumpus they'll be on you like a rash, but they're not too smart and can be gunned down by a sleight of hand if you're

Those policemen eh? Always lying down on the job. Right, back to the assignment

equipped with a machine gun. The FBI are sharper, better armed and drive cool black sedans. When the army is after you you'll encounter armed jeeps and tanks.

The implementation of the three gangs means that there's now a real 'freelance' feel to the game - as you play one off against the other to earn big bucks and complete missions for each family to finish a level, or area. When you're not on a job, three arrows - purple, blue and green -

permanently point in the direction of each gang's turf. To avoid appearing on any gang's concrete slippers





The happy face cars belong to The Loonies gang. Steal 'em at your peril

list, you must earn their respect – and the best way of gaining it is to kill members of another gang. This is a risky business, though, as it also marks you out as a public enemy for the ones you duff up. The Loonies hate The Yakuza while The Yakuza can't stand The Zibatzu and they, in turn, want to do The Loonies in.

The playing screen has three coloured bars in the top left-hand corner which measure your rating in the eyes of the three gangs – in plus or minus points. If you go around shooting or mowing down one gang your ratings will rise for another. Driving around the block on the pavement near a gang HQ usually nets quite a few brownie points, though it will also attract unwelcome levels of cop attention. Gang cars are identified by symbols on the roof – a giant red Z for Zibatzu, a smiley face for The Loonies and a very odd symbol for the Yakuza.

Like the original, you take a job by going to public phone boxes operated by each of the gangs. Once you have accepted a job a single arrow,

which will guide you to your target (or targets), appears in conventional GTA manner.

Pickups are available throughout the streets and include weapons, health, armour and special bonuses. An example of the latter is the Kill Frenzy, a pickup that gives you a specific task to be completed for loads of money. One gives you a bazooka with the task of blowing up 10 Zibatzu Z cars in 60 seconds, another gives you a flame thrower and the task of killing 80 Loonies in two minutes, again for a big bonus. These bonuses are essential. You earn a pitance for bashing cars and running over pedestrians and a good bit more for completing missions, but to move on to the next city zone with a



It's disgraceful

high score under your belt you need to score big earnings.

The jobs on offer are not for the faint-hearted, politically correct or morally sensitive. Players of GTA will come across few surprises and plenty of outrageous excesses. Apart from driving getaway on bank jobs (which can go wrong, so you may have to re-spray the car), you've also got to pick up stooges and drop them off for torture and murder, blow up rival gang businesses, pick up drugs and deliver them to dealers on street corners so one gang can corner the market in 'blow', and other dubious activities which your mother would no doubt frown upon, never mind the CPS.

All this is done to a soundtrack that's peppered with top tunes like 'Taxi Drivers Must Die' with messages from big city radio DJs inciting the public to violence. The radio call-in aspect has become extremely bizarre with talk radio cranks blabbering about sexual and religious perversions, among other things. The tabloids should have a field day

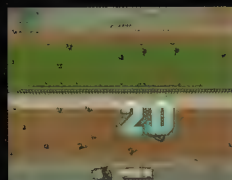
if all I've heard is allowed through in the final version.

The intro movie is modern B material crossed with the martial arts movie genre. It's stylishly shot in what looks like the unbeatable combination of New York and Peckham, and features a clean-cut young criminal up to no good, playing one dangerous-looking bunch of villains off against another – until he himself is topped by an assassin. It's good stuff and sets the scene for the game, although the contrast between the movie and the top-down game view is marked.

I hate the word 'extreme' with a vengeance. Especially when it's spelt Xtreme. It's so overused these days that it should be banned from existence. However, I'm a very lazy journalist with few standards to uphold so I'm going to use it in spite of myself. Because in this instance it's very appropriate indeed: GTA 2 is Xtreme GTA, with Xtremely bloody knobs on. It retains the simplicity of play and relatively innocent graphics of the first game but manages to make great strides forward in its arrogant disregard for any sort of rule of law, or any sense of political correctness... and yes it's great fun. Again.

The version we've played still has a lot of tidying up to do, but Rockstar, and Take 2 – the game's publisher, are confident it will be ready by October. We should be able to review a final version next month, but if you see it on the shelves before then you can be sure that if GTA was your bag, this one will be too. As long as you're over 18.

Alan Dykes



Running over pedestrians earns cash

Live by the sword... die by the gun. But not really – the cops will drop you on the road

THE VERDICT

LABEL: Rockstar Games

WEB: www.take2interactive.com

DEVELOPER: DMA

MULTIPLAYER: No

UP & RUNNING

The game side is fully playable now and great fun

STILL TO DO

Player characters: General tidying up and tweaking

TEST SPECS

Installation: P1300, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo 2 Control, Keyboard

RELEASE DATE: 22 OCTOBER

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ROWAN JACKSON ON...

I've got a top tip for avoiding Sunday afternoon slobery. Simply Visit the ECTS games show and attempt to check out every major game that interests you. Hey presto: several miles of world class speed-walking, copious step aerobics climbing on and off stands, and no time to munch even so much as a packet of pork scratchings. You're probably aware that the industry trade show has once again taken place. As usual the PC Gaming World team were there to bring you the gossip on this year's most eagerly anticipated titles.

First port of call on my whistle-stop tour was Digital Integration (now part of French publishers Titus) where I caught up with the long overdue F/A-18E Super Hornet. The full story can be found on page 32, but to summarise the news is both good and bad. On the positive front, Super Hornet reaffirms DI's reputation for unstinting technical accuracy. Hard-liners will be pleased to note that no Hornet sim this side of the Official Secrets' Act could possibly contain more detail. A major drawback, however, concerns the non-inclusion of proper campaigns for the game's initial release.

Apparently due to engine problems, we'll have to make do with 40 fixed missions until an updated 'Gold' version adds a fully dynamic campaign structure next year. Shades of F-22: ADF I hear you cry!

As reported in our August issue, the second front of WW2 flight sims is preparing for the big push this winter. Psynosis' WWII Fighter Command and Electronic Arts' Flight Combat: Thunder Over Europe both look the business, but it was MicroProse's stunning B-17 Flying Fortress II that really caught my attention. A feature list as long as your arm extends to full control over the 10-man crew of a 'Fort' plus the chance to fly seven other allied and German fighters (including the suicidally flammable Me-163). Photorealistic really isn't too strong a word for the view from the cockpit. You can actually see the joystick, throttle and rudder pedals moving as you throw it around the sky and the view through the Plexiglas is equally astounding. Open fire and shell casings tumble from your wing ports towards the best rendition of European countryside that I've ever seen in a game.

Other MicroProse titles on the high profile Hasbro Interactive stand included Geoff Crammond's awesome looking Grand Prix 3 and also Gunship III – spiritual descendent of the PC's first serious chopper sim. It features an ingenious translucent virtual cockpit plus woodland modelled from individual trees. It could well be the hero-sim to beat next year, especially when M1 Tank Platoon 3 joins it in the new 'Electronic Battlefield' multiplayer environment.

Of course there were plenty more enticing titles at the show, including confirmation of Codemasters Colin McRae 2 and plans for the next TOCA licence. But after my hectic stint on the hoof I think I deserve a bit of a sit down. After all, I haven't played Driver all day.

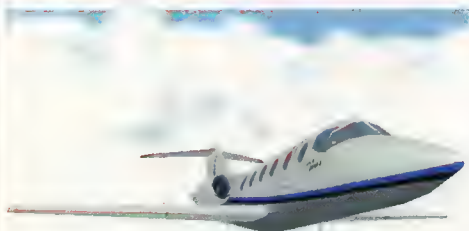
Comments or questions on sims? Write to Rowan or email him on pcgw_mail@zd.com



...no time to munch even so much as a packet of pork scratchings...

FLIGHT UN

Air Traffic keeps on mounting up...



The clouds look good – but the weather system is brilliant

After Fly! finally received its take-off clearance last month, Flight Unlimited III is now lining up at PCGW's rigorous flight test facility. The Beta release of Flight 3 was a revelation and promises to be a serious contender for the top simulation spot.

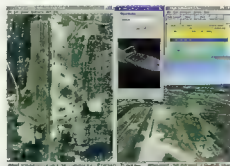
As with previous Flight Unlimited releases, the scenery area covered is limited but incredibly detailed. That said, it has been expanded significantly here and covers the Seattle area, Mount Rainier and the West Coast down to the Baja Peninsula and as far East as Montana. It's also backwards-compatible with (full retail) versions of Flight Unlimited II.

Flight Unlimited III uses terrain imagery down to a staggering four metres per pixel – and the effect is amazing. Perhaps more impressive is the digital elevation modelling used. This is where Fly! is lacking, but Flight Unlimited III gets just right. From rolling green hills to the monumental peaks of Mount Rainier, the terrain meanders effortlessly into the distance instead of simply being a flat, texture-mapped sheet. There is moving scenery too, and some of the flight challenges use these to good effect. For example, in one mission you must chase a speedboat and force it to stop

by landing in front of it, which calls for some decidedly fancy flying.

The airports are nicely detailed, with recognisable buildings, impeccable taxiway and runway markings, and most importantly, hordes of other flyers. Where Flight Unlimited III beats the competition is in its implementation of truly interactive Air Traffic Control. At the start of each flight, other aircraft's flight plans are plotted so that during your flight those around you are going about their everyday business. At busy airports, such as Sea Tac, this can make it difficult to squeeze in your request for taxiing – a truly authentic scenario as any real pilot will tell you.

Operating the radio is deceptively intuitive. Hit the space bar, then the number keys to select your message and transmit. Alt-F can be used to



The built-in scenery editor is a major bonus that will ensure greater longevity

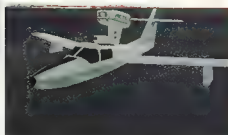
LIMITED III

automatically switch frequencies, which saves having to jot them down.

Jumping into the cockpit of one of the 10 featured aircraft reveals lovingly recreated panels, albeit single-screen ones. A nice half-panel display mode showing only essential instruments is a boon for Visual Flight Rules jaunts. The fixed views around the aircraft reveal luscious interiors, although the virtual cockpit view doesn't feature working instruments and is therefore a little redundant. Externally, all the flyable aircraft are detailed down to the last rivet, complete with moving parts. As we've come to expect from Looking Glass, the flight models all feel eminently credible. The mix of aircraft provides

a good spread, from the sedate glider to the luxurious Beech Bonanza jet.

As well as the excellent ATC, Flight Unlimited III has one more trick up its sleeve – weather. Rather than simply defining cloud types and levels, a full weather simulator is included. Effects such as updrafts over ridges, wind shear and thunderstorm formation are all accounted for. The set-up screen allows you to set weather severity and season, and clicking a button gives you an instant weather system. This doesn't stay still either, moving in real-time depending on the prevailing winds. Added to this is air turbulence which buffets the aircraft making it much more fun to fly. Understanding how all this interacts is particularly



The two included seaplanes make for some hairy flying!

essential when trying to master the Stemme S10-VT-powered glider. This elegant machine has a propeller that can be retracted when the pilot wants to glide without power. The rush of the wind over the aircraft is reproduced well, as are the other sounds both in and outside the cabin.

In poorer weather it's inevitable that you'll encounter clouds of various descriptions. From a distance these appear beautifully and add to the general effect. Once you get nearer, however, they begin to take on a blocky, painted look. Once inside them they become wispy and translucent. Various detail levels for the clouds are included, and these are necessary as the presence of a storm can really hit the frame rate. Looking Glass has catered for this by including a massive number of settings which can be adjusted to get the best performance from most PCs.

There are excellent lessons on flight basics and more advanced topics such as dealing with wind shear, and even on meteorology (useful for gliding). To fully round off this package there's an easy-to-use scenery editor which allows objects, including airports, to be placed anywhere in the outer terrain areas. Hopefully, this will spawn a



The cockpit panels are lavishly detailed, and yes, the knobs do all work

flurry of add-ons to extend Flight Unlimited III's capabilities even more. Judging by the number of Fly! accoutrements already appearing on the web, many people are willing to jump off the Microsoft bandwagon and try out pastures new.

But, has Flight Unlimited III got what it takes to outclass Microsoft's latest Flight Simulator update? We won't know fully until November...

Pros: Terrific 4m/pixel terrain, interactive ATIS, great weather.

Cons: Compared with MS Flight Sim, limited terrain and can't match its profusion of add-ons.

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS

LABEL: Electronic Arts

WEB: www.flight3.com

DEVELOPER: Looking Glass

PRICE: £39.99

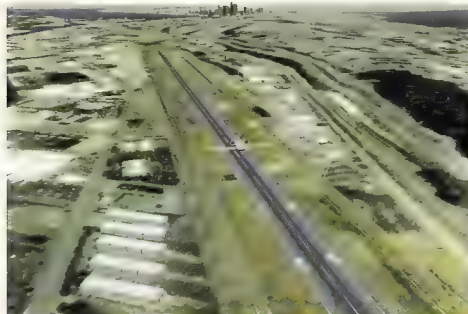
MULTIPLAYER: None

OUT: Now

AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min installation: Win95/98, P166, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, DirectX-compatible SVGA video and sound card. We recommend: P133, 16x CD, 64Mb RAM, 3D accelerator video card, 4Gb free HDD space. Controls: Joystick, throttle, rudder pedals, mouse, keyboard. Supports: D3D Force Feedback



Four metres per pixel resolution – Wow!

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VIP CLASSIC AIRLINERS



The distinctive silhouette of the De Havilland Comet is recreated with panache

On its fourth outing, the VIP Group has chosen to present a collection of 13 airliners of undisputed pedigree, spanning the golden age of commercial aviation between 1935 and 1967.

From the DC-3/C-47 Dakota with its distinctive aura recreated to a tee, to the narrow-bodied 727 and Trident airliners which can still be seen trawling the airways.

The cockpit panels have been reconstructed from detailed photos and diagrams, and they all convey the atmosphere of the individual aircraft, such as the claustrophobic De Havilland Comet. This feeling of authenticity is also carried through to the flight models – the slower prop planes are easy to drop on to small airfields, while the lumbering turbo jets can be a handful, unlike the sprightly three-engined Boeing 727 and Trident.

VIP Classic Airliners will certainly enchant aircraft enthusiasts who want a change from the CRT-filled cockpits and quiet turbobans of today's planes, but some may find it wearisome.

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS
LABEL: The Associates
WEB: www.flightsim.co.uk
DEVELOPER: The VIP Group
PRICE: £24.99
MULTIPLAYER: 1-8 players (2-8 via Internet, LAN, modem)
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA All Ages

SYSTEM
Min Installation: Flight Simulator 98, Wings 98, P200, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, 1Mb video card **We recommend:** P3 300, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb video card
Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick **Advanced Supporters:** D3D, Force Feedback



JUMBO 747-400

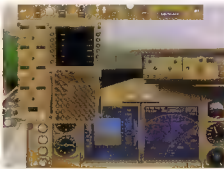
More room to swing a cat – but not as easy



Subtle curves, immaculate paintwork and animated parts are all true to life

Thirty years since it first made it into the air, the 747 Jumbo Jet is still going from strength to strength. One and a half billion passengers later, and the veteran of the skies may still be recognisable from the outside, but the interior is a different matter. Featuring the latest electronic systems, the 747-400 has more Cathode-Ray Tubes than most modern fighters.

In order to really show off all this paraphernalia, Flight 1 has developed the Tru-View panel display system. This features six different view points which can be navigated with the mouse, and include Captain, First Officer, Jumpseat and instrument panels. Also included is a landing view which can automatically be activated



Welcome to the new glass cockpit with all mod cons of little round gauges

when approach decision height is reached. All the views have been tweaked to give the right zoom and perspective for greater realism. The external modelling of the aircraft is exemplary, with smooth curves, animated parts galore and a dozen different liveries. The panels are remarkably comprehensive, and look fabulous in 1024x768 and above. The sounds are also vividly realistic, from the whine of the turbines to the cacophony of audible cockpit warnings.

What is still striking about the 747-400 is its sheer size. And not surprisingly, it steers like a cow. Don't expect to hop out of a Cessna to take full control of this monster. Like the real thing, it demands a huge amount of respect and must be flown smoothly



Certainly not a virgin to the skies – but cutting a more dashing stance

or not at all. It's definitely not for those who revel in throwing aerobatic planes around the sky – the Jumbo requires forethought and patience from the pilot. Those willing to persevere will find huge satisfaction in mastering this legendary beast, and this package provides the ideal opportunity for trying.

[Note – the panel displays do not work with 'non-window mode' video cards, such as those based on Voodoo I and II chipsets.]

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS
LABEL: The Associates
WEB: www.flightsim.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Flight 1 Software
PRICE: £19.99
MULTIPLAYER: 1-8 players (2-8 via Internet, LAN, modem)
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA All Ages

SYSTEM
Min Installation: Flight Simulator 98, Wings 98, P200, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, 1Mb video card **We recommend:** P3 300, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb video card
Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick, Force Feedback **Advanced Graphics Support:** D3D (NOT Voodoo cards)



AIR RACES

Tally-ho! See you at the bar, chaps



Hand luggage only in the stupendous Gee Bee R-1

In a throwback to the days of Pylon races and the Schneider Cup, *Air Races* features circuits around Las Vegas, Paris and Tokyo which set the scene for some Indy-car-style atmosphere. Loading up one of the adventures puts you in the cockpit of either your standard Cessna (for practising), or one of five racing powerhouses. Of particular note is the stupefying Gee Bee R-1 – quite literally a monstrous engine with two tiny wings and a real devil to fly.

Some enthusiastic commentary helps to start the adrenaline pump-

ing as you line up on the runway. Once the starter gives the signal it's time to gun the engines and head to the first mark. No course maps are included, with instructions being given by the race commentator, such as flying between cooling towers and performing touch-and-go landings at specific airports, which can be a real nightmare in the racing planes.

This add-on promises much, but the lack of exciting scenery, mediocre quality of the aircraft and limited number of races means it's nowhere near as good as it could have been. And the addition of four DEA adventures still fails to lift it above average.

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS

LABEL: Wizard Works
WEB: www.wizardworks.com
DEVELOPER: Wizard Works
PRICE: £14.99
MULTIPLAYER: None
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min installation: Flight Simulator 98, Wings 98, 486DX/66, 8Mb RAM, 2x CD, DirectX-compatible SVGA video and soundcard. **We recommend:** P200, 4x CD, 32Mb RAM, 3D accelerator card. **Control:** joystick, throttle, rudder pedals, mouse, keyboard. **Supports:** D3D



The racing version of the P-51D – and boy is she quick

LUFTWAFFE COLLECTION

Seeing how the other side flew



Main: Cause havoc with the almighty turbo-charged ME-262. Inset: Even Monty Python fans are catered for with the Albatross

Not content with providing the flight sim world with the ultimate assembly of RAF aircraft, The Associates brings us *Luftwaffe Collection* to balance the playing field. Compatible with both Flight Simulator 98 and Combat Flight Simulator, there's plenty of scope for re-enacting a few old battles with some unlikely match-ups.

The range of machines included here is staggering, from WWI Fokker E series and the Red Baron's infamous steed, right up to the MiG 29 and Eurofighter Typhoon of the present day. And for the true enthusiast, some old classics such as the Flettner helicopter and Blohm und Voss BV138 flying boat. The one thing in common with all these aircraft models is that a tremendous amount of care and attention has been devoted to them. Not only are all the cockpits modelled with exquisite detail, but the exteriors are equally handsome. It's even possible to look inside the cockpits to see the pilots' faces and the glowing Heads-Up Displays. Especially impressive are the animated moving parts – undercarriage gears come up realistically, such as folding forwards on the Tornado,

and the engine inlets on Eurofighter even change with different flap settings. The handling feels genuine too.

Our main niggles is that you have to install all the aircraft twice if you want to use them with both Flight Simulator 98 and CFS. Also, those with an aggressive bent will only find half a dozen WWII aircraft really suitable for CFS combat, although it's great fun taking the fighter jets up against the propeller brigade.

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS

LABEL: The Associates
WEB: www.flightsim.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Flightsim Developers
PRICE: £24.99
MULTIPLAYER: 1-8 players (2-8 via Internet, LAN, modem)
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min installation: Flight Simulator 98 and/or Combat Flight Simulator, Wings 98 P266, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, DirectX-compatible SVGA video and soundcard. **We recommend:** P11300, 8x CD, 64Mb RAM, 3D accelerator card, (Voodoo II/III or Riva TNT2) **Control:** joystick, throttle, rudder pedals, mouse, keyboard. **Supports:** D3D, 3Dfx

JOHN BENNETT ON...

Sometimes I worry that the games industry might be losing its sense of fun. I'm not talking about the latest stats-driven visually despondent micro-management simulation from Audi-land, or the possibility of sequel to SIN, either. I'm talking about the mood at the ECTS trade show.

Yes, it was as hot, noisy and sweaty as ever – with the usual collection of sill-con-enhanced stand decoration. But where do we find ourselves at the end of each day, when it comes time to do some serious hob-nobbing (apparently still legal in this country)? Maybe the Sega bash, which has almost as many people playing Dreamcast games as anything else. If you know anything about Dreamcast you'll realise this is more of a reflection on the party than the awesome nature of the console. Alternatives to this are a massive Sony event in an underground car park in Shoreditch (now there's glam), or a pub quiz at the local Earl's Court boozier.

Hey, in many ways I'm glad the industry is growing up a bit. But while the business brushes down its serious suit and rehearses lines that include 'leveraging assets' and 'compelling experiences', I hope they remember one simple thing: games have to be fun. I sat through far too many po-faced demos where publishers threw numbers at me (more levels than so-and-so, more units, more tracks etc) and failed to show me why their new baby was going to be a blast to play.

It makes me hanker a little for the early days when people were, one and all, stupidly enthusiastic about their latest game, the lunatic quirky game could break through and the promotional tat was amusing and inventive tat. (How often in your life have you been given a tree?) In the early hours, the lobby of the Holiday Inn King's Cross was packed to the gills with everybody who was anybody in the business (assuming they could remember who they were or what they were doing in a Holiday Inn. On second thoughts, best not ask), and the guy in the Alfred Chicken costume could be guaranteed to start a punch-up on the show floor.

But that was then, and none of today's great games would have been possible then. This month we've a cracking trio of action games ready and reviewed for you. Quality not quantity, just the way we like it – no also-rans or 'it's ok if you're curiously obsessive about that sort of thing' games. And all three of them are from the same source – GT Interactive. Good on yer chaps.

First up is *Driver*, the much-hyped and genuinely rather glamorous muscle car experience with the Steve McQueen/Bullitt meets Starsky & Hutch feel. Then there's the fantasy-themed *Drakan*, undoubtedly one of the most innovative third-person action adventures we've seen in a very long time. And finally there's the definitive bot-matching first person shooter from Epic, *Unreal Tournament*. Quake III, effeminate faerie-lights and all, is going to have a very serious fight on its hands to eclipse this one.



...amusing and inventive tat. How often in your life have you been given a tree?

Comments or questions on action games? Write to John or email him on elvis_bacon@zd.com

DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME

At last! *Pygnosis'* flying dragon epic takes to flight

Third-person perspective action adventures were runners up in last year's Over Used Game Genre Awards so you've got to admire *Surreal's* pluck. Not only has it gone for an over populated genre but it's gone the whole hog and made the main character female. Medieval Lara Croft in *Ye Olde Tombe Raider?* Not quite.

Drakan isn't perfection, it's not a classic and although it adds some refreshing variety to the TR pedigree it isn't what you would call frighteningly original. Never mind. It is jolly good fun, and gimmicks though they may be, the added elements like the dragon riding lift the game above its plagiaristic peers.

Let's get this straight. I'm not going to be praising the story, which is stuffed with clichés. Retrieve the magical talisman of this, the holy hammer

of that, fight the evil sorcerer of whatever and free you...zzzz. Likewise, the names fit the story, pretentious and possessing of far too many identical adjacent consonants. Moving on...you play Rynn, she's handy with a sword and her little brother is captured by the evil Wartoks. Her village is destroyed and the survivors are taken into slavery. Rynn finds out that there is a dragon, Arokh, lying dormant nearby, which is handy. Pretty soon you're waking Arokh up and making moves to free your enslaved sibling.

For the majority of the game you are on your own as most of the interior levels have entrances too small for Arokh to enter. As usual there are the traps and puzzles that define the genre. The problems vary from the find-key-for-lock through deadly-trap-to-outsmart and the more complex end-of-level-big-puzzle which



Arokh: Long on scales, short on temper



First dates can be problematic

you have to jump all over the place to complete. There are a couple of traps that sneak up on you, the only way you even know they are there is when they kill you and you have to re-load and be more careful. Much of the game is spent fighting the motley assortment of ne'er do wells that inhabit the darker regions and here we see another change from the TR template. Combat is hard, no question. Most of the creatures you face can outrun you and will hack you to bits while you retreat and if you run in screaming you will die quick. Ranged weapons are rare and of the bow and arrow variety so you hack and bash the opposition with a selection of swords, clubs, maces, axes and hammers. Specific body damage is included, so if you do it right you can hack off a limb and watch the poor bugger redecorate the place in arterial red. They stagger around for a while, screaming and jetting claret all over the shop for your amusement. Decapitation, disembowelling, if you hit the sweet spot for enough damage they'll even explode in a fountain of



Rynn, our Heroine of the Hour

butcher's shop scraps. But of course they can do the same to you.

The weapons have various ratings, speed, range, damage and durability, which is basically how many strikes you can do before the weapon breaks. Powerful weapons tend to have lower durability. There are magical weapons that ignore armour and have secondary attack spells. Rynn's default weapon is fast and never breaks but hits like a wet lettuce so you'll want to collect additional weapons by completing missions or whupping heavy-duty opponents. Limited amount of space in your inventory means you have to balance the giant hammer that hits like a rockslide but is about to fall apart against the sturdy Mithril sword that does half the damage but cuts through armour like butter.

Control can be with the keyboard, mouse, joystick, gamepad or any combination. I used the keyboard to control movement and the mouse to control the camera with the mouse buttons for attack. The camera is under your control mostly but I did find it still moved into awkward spots



Mine all mine

One of the larger (and deadier) inhabitants

when I was in the heat of battle. There aren't any of the advanced acrobatics found in Lara's adventures, Rynn jumps, rolls and climbs ladders but she won't be competing in the Croft Olympics any time soon, which suits me but does reduce the complexity of the levels.

Rynn is blood-bonded to Arokh, the Red Dragon early on so if he gets hurt, she gets hurt. Rynn can also climb aboard him to travel around the more spacious caverns and the open-air levels. Flight control is basic but more than adequate and he provides some heavy-duty firepower from his breath. There are airborne enemies to see off and a nice touch is that when Rynn is on the ground, Arokh will attack foes she hasn't spotted without having to be told. The graphics are impressive, but not groundbreaking. The open areas are especially well done while the caverns are a bit samey by comparison.

On a PII 350 with a Voodoo 2 SLI all the gadgets could be turned on and fogging reduced to a minimum at 1024x768 with a nice smooth frame rate. Some of the areas are too dark, no matter what I did with the gamma correction, but these are rare. On the whole it's pretty enough and doesn't need a beast of a PC to run it.

Multi-player action comes in LAN or Internet play over the Mplayer server. You get three different deathmatch experiences for your money, but it has to be said that, if you want deathmatch action, there are better

games. Quake, Team Fortress and Unreal Tournament spring to mind. This isn't a multi-player game at heart, live with it.

Drakan is different enough not to be dismissed as a Tomb Raider clone offhand. There's too little depth and the story is tired, but at least it's unobtrusive to the main thrust of the game, which is a fun little trawl through hell and giblets. There's enough here to inspire a warm recommendation from me and I am going back to play it again after I finish this review

PROS: Goodlooking offering that makes its mark in the overcrowded Tomb Raider genre. Fun to play and quite more-ish.

CONS: Dreadful back-story, too-simple structure, and not much cop in multiplayer. Rynn is probably not the new Lara

Paul Ditta

DETAILS

LABEL: Psynosis

WEB: www.psynosis.com

DEVELOPER: Surreal

PRICE: £34.99

MULTIPLAYER: LAN or Internet play

OUT: Now

AGE RATING: ELS/PA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 9x, P166, 32MB RAM, Direct 3D compatible 3D card, 16 bit soundcard
We recommend: PIII300, 64MB RAM, and gen 3D card (Voodoo 2 etc...) **Support:** 3Dfx, D3D



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

It's here and it rocks!



This annoyed me – and you know the bots must be good when they annoy you

This is one of those games that I just couldn't wait for because I want to play it Online. In fact I couldn't wait so I organised an Unreal Tournament party at The Playing Fields in London. Head over to the Online section (see page 128) to check it out.

As we've already previewed and playtested Unreal Tournament, I won't go over the basics. Suffice it to say it's the game that's stealing the thunder from Quake III: Arena and as such, the first game to bring the joy of first-person shooter multiplayer deathmatch to the masses.

The game has come along as expected with the issues raised last month tidied up nicely. The first time Unreal Tournament runs, it activates a video card hardware/driver detection phase. From hereon, it will detect a Voodoo card and select Glide, a generic D3D accelerator or, if you're a 3D pauper, software mode. Yes, D3D is now working and it's looking absolutely fantastic. The only noticeable difference to the Glide version being texture pre-caching delays on loading a level.

Epic Games is really pulling out the stops to test Unreal Tournament into the ground. It's got a somewhat

tarnished reputation with Unreal multiplayer mode and it's also looking to redress the first-person shooter bug syndrome – where the released game needs several patches before it will work properly. All that remains is network code testing and, from what we could tell at our Unreal Tournament party, it's looking pretty darn cool. Based on the positive results of the testing, there should be a playable demo by the time you read this, and it should hit the manufacturing stage directly after. At last!

Having witnessed 50-odd gamers play Unreal Tournament, I can sum up their first impressions in phases. The 'Mmm, this isn't Unreal' phase through to the 'Hey, this isn't bad' phase. Then starts the 'Blimey, this is bloody good isn't it!' phase, blending to the final unadulterated joy phase punctuated with elated shouts and



Here comes the Redeemer!



Sniping from the very top of this Oil Rig-style level in the Domination game

competitive trash talk. Certainly Epic doesn't defend its multiplayer experience of the original Unreal. It knew it was poor and it has spent the past year-and-a-half fixing it.

The new and different aspect of Unreal Tournament is obviously the Tournament single-player game progression. Here, the player must face an ever-escalating scale of AI players across the superb levels in each of the game types. When the player eventually comes first on the last

level of that game type, they get a trophy for that game type. There's Deathmatch, Domination, Assault, Last Man Standing and, of course, Capture The Flag.

Does it work, though? Is playing the bots like playing real people? Undoubtedly it is, since the bots fooled several attendees at our Unreal Tournament party into thinking they were humans. This would be an interesting new version of the Turing Test were it not for the



Trying to cut my way through the opposition with the enemy flag and Mr Chaingun



Above: Giving orders in Assault
Left: Flakker versus Pulse Gun
Below: The models actually swim!



Here's my team mates (bots) guarding our flag while I come in with the blue's!

fact that the bots give themselves away with their effective but repetitive auto-taunts. It's a lot of fun to play the bots, though, either in straight deathmatch or in the team-play modes.

The AI in the teamplay modes often defies belief. It's hard to tell what's being done by design and what's pure chance, but certain elements – like when a bot leader is killed and the bots nominate a new leader – is quality stuff. The usual tricks and tips to fool bots – such as those free add-ons for Quake II – just don't work. Try running away

from a Unreal Tournament bot if he wants to get you...

Similarly, they aren't super-human. Surprise is your best weapon – just the same as with a real player. If they don't hear you and you're out of their field of vision – they won't know you're there. Playing Capture The Flag with a team of bots versus an all-bot side is probably the classiest element of Unreal Tournament. It could play it for hours, setting the bots on auto skill-adjust ensures you get a solid, close game with nail-biting action.

Ultimately though, Unreal Tour-

nament is going to excel on the Internet. This side of the game has been spit-shined beyond all recognition. Unreal Tournament produces some superb statistics including graphs via ngStats. You can even opt to have your results lobbed into the global ngStats ladder! Hell, if you want to run a server, the administration is looked after via a Web interface. In fact, anyone who runs a server on a LAN or on the Internet is going to love this. The Internet/LAN GUI even has a built-in IRC client for chatting to players ahead of the game, and sports server browsing off a master list and adds servers to a favourites tab. Basically, it does everything Gamespy does – right out of the box. It's not going to be hard to find a place to play.

Finally, Unreal Tournament will allow you to check out what we've all been raving about without fear of

embarrassment. The first time you play on the Internet or even against friends and workmates, you'll be one lean, mean, fighting machine having been to bot bootcamp and back. That means that only the most action-loathing gamers could possibly justify not picking up this game. Can we have six stars please?

PROS: The best first-person shooter to date – more gameplay in the box, superb bots, great levels, fantastic graphics.

CONS: It's not out yet and the present suggested sale of GT may not be helping it to do so.

Mat Bettinson



Up close and personal, we like that

DETAILS

LABEL: CT Interactive

WEB: www.unreal.gtgames.com/

DEVELOPER: Epic Games

PRICE: \$34.99

MULTIPLAYER: Internet, LAN

OUT: Late Autumn

AGE RATING: TBA (15+ expected)

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 98, P200, 32MB RAM, 4x CD, D3D-compatible graphics card We recommend: P3 300, 128MB RAM, TNT-based graphics or 3Dfx Voodoo 2 or better Control: Keyboard, joystick and mouse. Supports: 3Dfx Glide, OpenGL, D3D, DirectSound3D, Aureal 3D, EAX



DRIVER

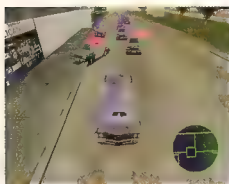
There ain't no substitute for cubic inches...

When I was a wee lad, my dad owned an enormous Ford Consul that I assumed harboured an equally substantial engine. Sadly my illusions were shattered during one of its many trips to the garage. Instead of the throbbing powerhouse I'd hoped to see, lifting that gigantic bonnet revealed nothing but a tiny lump of oily iron covering deep within the echoing bowels of the engine bay.

Had I grown up in the United States, however, my view might have been very different. At the same time my automotive dreams were being shattered, the Yanks were building seriously fast cars using big, bad V8 engines. These brutes soon became

essential tools of the trade for bank robbers and Hollywood film directors alike, as the legendary muscle car came of age. Who better to simulate these outrageous machines than Reflections, Newcastle-based creator of the Sony PlayStation's excellent Destruction Derby games?

You may be surprised to learn that Driver doesn't actually feature a funky 70's soundtrack (I ended up humming the theme from *Shaft* for effect). But fear not, the deep-chested bellow of a V8 on full song stirs the emotions as well as any tune. As you materialise behind a gleaming black Dodge look-alike, the exhaust burble sounds meaner than a TVR with a blown back-box.



I think they want me to pull over



Look out, it's the quayside cops



Jamming on the anchors

On the move, you can choose between three different viewing perspectives. I opted for the above and behind option after finding that my favourite in-car view lacked the all-important dashboard and steering wheel. Those preferring to hug the road can opt for a bumper's eye-view of the action.

Control-wise, I found the setup options rather disappointing. You can't tone down the razor-sharp steering responses, while the throttle and brakes are nearly impossible to modulate smoothly. But, when you rumble out of the car park into the bright Miami sunshine, these gripes are soon forgotten.

Constructed from actual road and



scenery maps, Driver's metropolises are every bit as convincing as your average Hollywood blockbuster. The hills of San Francisco and the boulevards of Miami are your playgrounds early on, joined by Los Angeles and New York, complete with Central Park and the towering Empire State Building, later in the game. Virtual citizens bring every town to life as cars, trucks and pedestrians all go about their business. Traffic stops at red lights, indicates and generally behaves far better than your average

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Handyman required. Must be able to mend fences

London motorist. Pedestrians stroll around, window-shopping, and even dine out at pavement cafes.

In theory, you could drive around the gameworld all day and never get into mischief. But try as I might, I never managed to keep it legal for more than 30 seconds. One poke of the burnout button and I was off like a startled hare leaving smoking black lines down the road. Enabling the auto handbrake feature also allows you to give every corner the *Starsky & Hutch* treatment – howling round sideways administering liberal doses of opposite lock. The pavement's extremely handy for avoiding traffic jams, as well. Bollards, benches and those essential giant cardboard boxes

all sail gracefully over your roof as you bear down on panic-stricken pedestrians, scattering for their lives.

Of course you can't have this much fun without attracting some unwanted attention. Break the law and the local constabulary will be all over you like a cheap suit. Rather than give you a ticket they prefer to ram you into submission. Although no amount of trauma actually affects the performance of your car, even minor knocks take their toll on the bodywork. Accumulate enough damage and your trusty steed gives up the ghost.

If you're going to get chased you might as well be going somewhere special and that's where the game's

CARS ON FILM



Fans of the 70's cop movie genre will recognise several Quentin Tarantino-style tributes in the missions and locations of the game. Dodging trams and performing huge jumps over the precipitous streets of San Francisco could easily be lifted straight from *Bullitt*, featuring Steve McQueen in probably the best car chase ever to hit the silver screen. Likewise, one of *Drivers'* undercover missions requires a breakneck dash through crowded city streets desperately trying to keep tabs on a suspect riding in a train overhead. Ten points if you identified Gene Hackman as Jimmy 'Popeye' Doyle in the 1971 classic *The French Connection*.

covert missions come in. Selecting an undercover career casts you in the role of a cop, touting your considerable talents to unsuspecting hoods. But before being hired, you must first demonstrate your credentials performing stunts that would put Maureen from TV's *Driving School* series to shame. In a scene almost libellously reminiscent of the 1978 classic film *The Driver*, you have 60 seconds

to complete a gruelling sequence of manoeuvres including reverse 180's and a high-speed slalom between concrete pillars. Believe me, it's not easy. After much wailing of tyres and several dozen cars I finally earned my first 'job'.

Offers of work come your way via an answer machine in your typically 1970's office. As getaway driver for a bank job, my presence was required



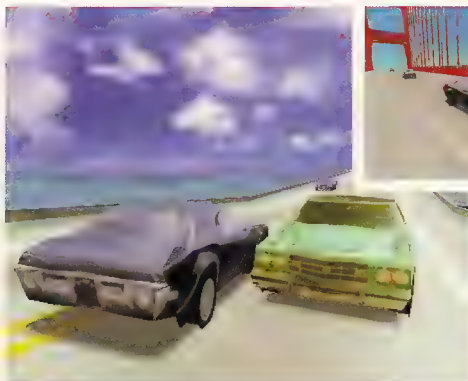
94% PC Zone
93% Ultimate PC

85% PC Gamer

50% PC Zone



the collection



Drivers hoot when you get too close

on the other side of town within a ludicrously stingy timescale. Barrelling down the wrong side of the freeway with several jam sandwiches in tow, I found ducking and diving between the oncoming traffic to be the best way of shaking off unwanted attention. Driver's cops are a bit shaky in the old steering department and a bone-crunching head-on usually puts them off the scent.

It's not easy reading the A-to-Z

while doing 95mph through the municipal flower gardens. Fortunately, a map screen is on call allowing you to freeze the action and plan your route across town. When you've worked out where you're headed it's back to the action, where a mini-map helps you home-in on your destination. With the passengers safely on board you may be asked to drop them at a safe house, or deliver the ill-gotten gains somewhere else.



Jam sandwich! It's not hard to out fox the fuzz

Should you fail to meet your objectives, a restart option allows you to have another bash after a blissfully short re-loading interval. On the other hand, successful outings are rewarded by moody FMV cut-scenes that form a fairly predictable storyline featuring liberal doses of jive talking, from characters sporting highly questionable collars.

For a less involved action fix, the game also features a bunch of driving games to keep your tyres up to temperature. Among others, simple chase/getaway scenarios let you practice evasive manoeuvres, while Destruction Derby-style mayhem against hordes of kamikaze police cars provides some light relief.

Playing Driver reminded me a lot of Grand Theft Auto – but with superior graphics. With the detail set towards maximum at 800x600 resolution, my mid-range PII 300, plus Voodoo 2 SLI combo, never even raised a sweat. The claimed minimum spec of a P166 is pushing it a bit, but any decent PII, plus

respectable 3D-card combination, should do the business.

All told, we couldn't quite afford Driver the classic five-star rating we'd hoped. The much-vaunted Film Director Interface refused to work on our copy (see Play It Again, Cam...) and the lack of any multiplayer support is frankly unforgivable nowadays. Still, rough edges aside I enjoyed it and that's what really counts.

Like the automotive dinosaurs it portrays, Driver has its own inimitable style: crude but effective.

PROS: Fast cars, handbrake turns, cracking graphics and a real 'big city feel' give Driver film atmosphere

CONS: Control could have been more user-adjustable, minor rough edges

Rowan Jackson

PLAY IT AGAIN, CAM...



After any successful getaway – or spectacular failure, Driver allows you to immortalise, edit and re-live whole episodes again using the Film Directors Interface. In theory, you can view every second of the action from a selection of camera angles and even splice scenes together to make your own chase movies. Unfortunately, our review version steadfastly refused to save any footage whatsoever. We've been assured that the problem will be rectified before the game hits the streets for real



Yeeteeeeehal

DETAILS

LABEL: GT Interactive
WEB: www.gtinteractive.com
DEVELOPER: Reflections
PRICE: £29.99
MULTIPLAYER: N/A

OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows, P166, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, 4Mb 3D Graphics accelerator
We recommend: PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D Graphics accelerator, Steering wheel
Controls: Keyboard, joystick or wheel
Advanced Graphics Support: D3d, 3Dfx (Glide), Force Feedback controllers



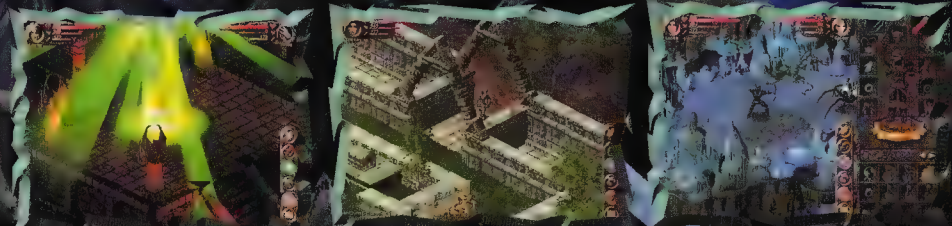
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IAN MARSH ON...

Most hardcore wargames still cling strongly to their boardgame roots, with hex grid-based fire and movement systems, a predictable and exploitable sequence of events, and an all-seeing view of the battlefield. Not only that, but this view is fixed and unchanging, and most units are minuscule, eye-straining versions of what they represent. The terrain might be beautifully drawn, but there's no real feeling of majesty. With so many technological advances in PC gaming, you'd have thought that specialist wargames developers could do better than produce the same old worthy but unoriginal stuff year in, year out.

Fortunately, they have. Last month my wargaming socks were blown clean to Bermuda by two games that completely ditch the conventions. *Fighting Steel* and, in particular, *Force 21*, make fine use of 3D acceleration to change not only the perspective of a battlefield but also the detail level of units. It's a change that requires a rethink of how to win a battle.

For a start, you genuinely can't see round obstacles and have to use your judgement about the likely location of enemies. In *Force 21*, that means every hill, copse or building can potentially conceal an enemy; in *Fighting Steel*, the restricted visibility of night-time fighting and the need to establish radar or visual contact means finding and keeping track of your enemy is a challenge. For the 2D-thinker, there's a top-down plotting map, but even that's so rotatable to show contours in *Force 21*.

Both are real-time games, giving you the same thinking-time as the commanders on the spot (though, if you fancy a breather in *Fighting Steel*, you can pause the game to issue orders). It means that when things start going wrong, they do so very quickly, which encourages careful initial deployment, forward planning and the appropriate use of reserves – the sort of skills that real generals need. Importantly, neither game's interface gets in the way of the decision-making.

For a real-time game, *Fighting Steel* gives you a certain luxury because if the Bismarck opens up on you, you know you've got a lengthy reload time in which to react. Provided, that is, you're still afloat after eight approaching tonnes of metal has hit just.

Gamers will probably argue that these are more games than war simulations, that the factors are wrong, and that they are too simple. While I admit that the change brings with it the blight of suspect pathing and collision detection, plus curious decisions from AI commanders, these games' defects are no worse than those experienced in classic real-time strategy games such as *Age of Empires*. And it will get better.

What's important is that both *Fighting Steel* and *Force 21* usher in a new era of wargaming – wargames that apply technology to ditch now-unnecessary technology limitations. A heritage that today's wargamers can do without.

Ian Marsh

Comments or questions on strategy & wargaming? Write to Ian or email him on pcgw_mail@zd.com



Wargames developers could do better than produce the same old stuff – year in, year out

HOME

Awesome full-3D real-time space outing redefines RTS

They say you can never go home.

For the Kushan, it's more a case of not knowing they had the option until the relic of an ancient starship is uncovered along with a terrible truth: that the planet, which they have lived on for as long as records show, is not their home. Moved by this realisation, the population pools its resources to recreate a second starship – one that will journey along the route shown on an ancient star map – to find out just where they came from and, more importantly, why?

Your journey starts in orbit around your surrogate homeworld with the Mothership – your main base and fighting resource – edging free of its moorings and your initially spartan collection of vessels lining up before it. However, after a few test procedures to help introduce you to resource collecting, fighting and formation control, the Hyperspace

engines fire up and you're off – into the dark, black yonder.

Unique to *Homeworld* is its fully three-dimensional environment which, though light years away from any other real-time strategy game, takes seconds to master. Each vessel, or vessel group, can be selected with a single mouse-click and 'Focusing' with the 'F' key then makes it the central point of your view: wherever it goes, you go. From here you can zoom in to count the panels on its hull or zoom out to make it a dot in space, and your focus can also be rotated through 360 degrees to give you the best possible vantage point. With set key commands that store previously focused groups you can jump around your fleet at will, and the 'Home' key always returns you to your Mothership. Movement of a selected vessel is just as simple, with an 'elastic' line connecting your

SPECIAL FORCES

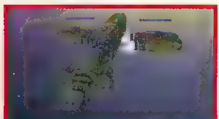
Thanks to some of the exotic pieces of technology available in *Homeworld*, confrontation does not always have to consist of standing toe-to-toe with your enemy and battling it out to the bitter end. With these devices at your disposal you are able to try everything from subtlety to stealing



Gravwell Generator: Develops a massive gravity well, which only frigates class ships or larger can escape from. Perfect for crippling mass fighter attacks

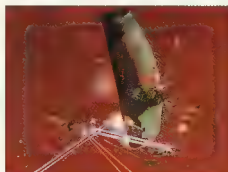


Cloak Generator: The ultimate stealth device, the Cloak Generator is ideal for either protecting vulnerable parts of your fleet or masking ships during covert operations



Salvage Corvette: Though not technically a weapon, the Salvage Corvette is invaluable for its ability to steal enemy ships of any size

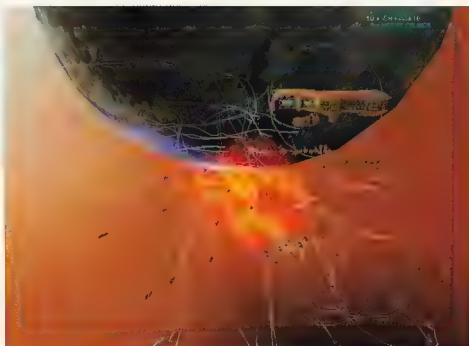
WORLD



mouse pointer to your ship whenever you press the shift key. Click your mouse and your ship will move across a horizontal plain to that point or, with Alt-Shift pressed, rise or descent to that point.

Similar facilities are available on the map screen which brings up a complete representation of the level showing asteroids, gas clouds and all friendly units as green dots (and red enemy dots if you've developed Proximity Detectors). You can rotate and zoom as easily as on the game screen to get an idea of relative positions, move your vessels over far greater distances and a tactical overlay allows easy identification of your various units. Clicking on any green dot on the map screen will also zoom you back into the main screen to the same position of the ship.

Adhering firmly to the adage: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', Homeworld contains many familiar elements that you'd expect to find in any descent real-time strategy. To build ships you require resources and to gather those you need Resource Collectors which



Fighter engagements can get a little involved but, a single-click will still select your various units – if you can catch one...

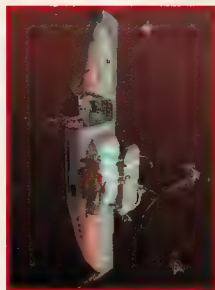
will, once ordered, happily burn their way through the asteroids and gas clouds available on the map. To supplement the production of your Collectors, Resource Controllers will also become available which can be positioned close to asteroid fields and other sources of material: vital to rapid collection on the very large and, occasionally, very sprawling levels. Added to that you have your Research Vessels which must first develop any new technology before it can be built by your Mothership. Happily, research takes time but not resources and, the more research vessels you have, the quicker you can get that new class of ship into production. You

also don't have to be focused on either your Mothership or Research Vessels to access their sub menus as, again, single key commands are all you need to bring up the build and research screens – wherever you happen to be on the map.

As the single-player game is essentially a journey, those ships that survive each level continue on to the next. To counter this, Homeworld's level structure skilfully pulls your abilities and resources here, there and everywhere. In the initial levels, with neither sufficient resources nor research options to attempt building a massive fleet, this effect is not too noticeable but, once your journey is well underway and you become the confident possessor of some Assault, Drone and Ion Frigates, the game suddenly veers off into a nebula of pain and misery, leaving your once mighty fleet in ruins, and you with the shocking realisation that big is not always better.

This being the case, understanding the tactical balance of your forces is essential for progress within Home-

SHIPBUILDING



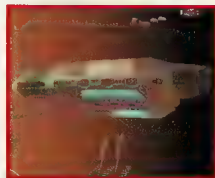
Given the right research, your Mothership can build every size and shape of vessel to help you combat any potential threat. Here's a whistle-stop tour of your fleet.



Interceptor: Not quite the baby of the fleet but still not much use against something as nasty as a Missile Destroyer. Best used en-masse



Assault Frigate: Multi-gunned, this mid-size ship comes in several variations. The most lethal of which is the Ion Frigate

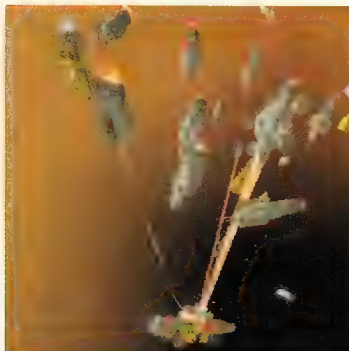


Carrier: The largest vessel in your fleet is actually a miniature Mothership, capable of building all manner of ships independently as well as acting as a repair bay and a Resource Controller. It's stupefyingly slow, however and, with few weapons, an ideal target for enemy assaults



You can mix and match vessels to make up your formation groups and they will stay in the same shape until reassigned or destroyed





A Taaldan Heavy Cruiser is the last thing you want to encounter on your travels, though having three Heavy Cruisers of your own along with numerous Destroyers makes the meeting far more enjoyable

world, as are the aggression settings and formations, and to familiarise yourself with these takes a little trial and error. Setting ships to an Aggressive posture ensures that they will throw themselves wholeheartedly into the fray but, if the last remaining enemy ship flees, they will pursue it across the map until they either

destroy it, run out of fuel, or run into another wave of enemy ships just waiting to pick them off. The Normal setting will ensure that any enemy will be attacked while in range but not as aggressively, and Evasive is the perfect setting for Resource Collectors and fighter craft attacking superior opposition. It doesn't guarantee that you'll

survive the battle, but they will last a lot longer than inferior numbers set to fight aggressively.

Battles between larger vessels can be fierce but dogfights, among smaller craft, are fast as well as furious. To stand any chance of victory – or to merely survive – it's vital that your ships are set into formation groups as soon as possible. Once done, even in the most confusing conflict, a single mouse-click on one of your ships will select the whole group so that they can be redirected or removed from the fray. As each vessel encountered or built in your travels will have its own peculiarities, so formations also have their own strengths and weaknesses too and, in conjunction with the aggression settings, provide a vast and varied selection of offensive and defensive options for you to master. Do you want an evasive sphere formation? Or an aggressive X? Each situation, whether you're using larger vessels, whether they are defending, attacking or escorting will affect your judgement on how to successfully coordinate the situation.

Playing Homeworld is both a visual and audio *tour de force* with superb gameplay and smooth, incredibly detailed graphics, combined with vast and varied backdrops and a musical score that adds masses of atmosphere to an already heady mix. Each level sets you up for new thrills and unexpected spills as your journey takes you further into the unknown,

and all the while the polished black and white cut scenes slowly unravel the murky threads of your past. With endless cockpit radio chatter as your fighters swoop and swirl, whooshing electric discharges of ion cannons as your destroyers engage, and the chunking recoil of plasma turrets as the enemy fights back, you'll find beauty even in the midst of the hardest battle. You'll constantly discover details that surprise and delight as you explore your fleet and fight your way through the void. They say there's no place like home. I say there's no game like Homeworld.

PROS: Outstanding game of breathtaking style and imagination. Redefines Real Time Strategy in one giant leap

CONS: For traditionalists of the 2D real-time strategy variety it might be one giant leap too far

Jordan Barrick



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Above: The map screen allows quick access to any vessel in your fleet (green), it also shows that the enemy (red) outnumber you by about 10 to one. Inset: Cloaked Minelayers make life unbearable for this enemy Carrier

DETAILS

LABEL: Sierra
WEB: www.sierra.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Relic Entertainment
PRICE: £39.99
MULTIPLAYER: LAN, Internet, modem
OUT: 29 September
AGE RATING: ELSA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 98, Windows NT (DirectX 5.0), P166, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, 1Mb PC video card
We recommend: PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb video card
Control: Keyboard, mouse. **Advanced**
Graphics Support: D3d, 3Dfx



THERE ARE FLIGHT SIMULATORS.



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CUTTHROATS

Plunder your way to glory and riches on the Spanish Main



Stand by to repel boarders! Sea combat is furious and bloody

It's not difficult to see why the golden age of piracy should appeal to game designers. Mix adventure with combat, add a dash of naked greed and bad behaviour and blend in extravagant characters with a colourful grasp of language. The mixture ought to be explosive, but somehow it never quite seems to come off. The great Sid Meier had a go a few years ago, but *Pirates!* wasn't his best. I haven't encountered any serious glitches in this new offering from Hothouse Creations, but both its defects and its merits are strikingly reminiscent of *Pirates!*

The merits first. It's nice looking and it's easy to pick up and play. You

start with a small crew and a basic ship, and work your way up to command of a pirate fleet and an army of cutthroats. On a map of the Caribbean you plot your voyages, working out which stretches of water to scour for likely prey and which ports to hole up in and refit. The graphics are crisp and clear and if you want more detail you switch to a view from the crow's nest. When enemy vessels are spotted it's time to run up the jolly roger and change to a battle screen. There's also land combat. Manoeuvre, fire cannons, kill and maim and stash the loot. Sound like your idea of fun? It ought to be, but practice turns out to be less satis-

fying than theory.

Firstly there's a problem of scale. On the main map ships and places look small and fiddly, with the result that the game seems characterless. A lack of character is also evident in the port screens, where buying and selling and other activities are functional to the point of anonymity. This would be acceptable if there were exciting compensatory features, but if any exist I haven't yet found them.

The battle sequences, the heart of the game, are most disappointing of all. The animations are attractively done, but again they're on too small a scale to impart any real sense of excitement. Cannons puff, tiny holes appear in sails, and when ships are crippled boarding actions take place, but these are merely reported offstage and there's nothing to see. Getting your ship to the point where it is ready to board, incidentally, is incredibly irritating and time-consuming. Nor is there any sense that you're manoeuvring a sailing ship, except for the fact that with a following wind you scoot along like a mosquito on crack and when it's contrary you just sit there wallowing like a hippopotamus in lard. Involving it isn't.

Another problem generic to this type of game is its open-endedness. You can sail around picking off merchant ships and accumulating loot for



Action isn't confined to sea. Lead your band of cutthroats ashore to search for loot

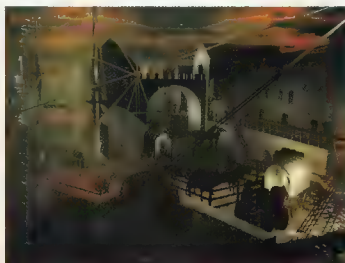
just as long as you like, provided you don't get killed. It ends up like one of those role-playing games where you just wander round for ever with no real aim beyond advancing to another level and picking up the next piece of awesome kit. Here it just comes down to how rich you want to be. Will you settle for just moderately disgusting wealth or will you try to become the seventeenth century's answer to Bill Gates? It's up to you.

Cutthroats is by no means a terrible game but it's certainly uninspiring. It also signally fails to address the one really crucial question about piracy – just why was Roger so damned jolly? **PROS:** Polished development. Pleasing scenarios. Easy to get in to.

CONS: Ultimately somewhat uninvolving. Lacks clear goal structure
Elvis Bacon



Plot your career of terror here on the main map of the Caribbean



Pop into port for revictualling and repairs. Havana should be a good place to put your feet up and have a cigar

DETAILS

LABEL: Eidos
WEB: www.hothouse.org
DEVELOPER: Hot House Creations
PRICE: £39.99
MULTIPLAYER: N/A
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: W95/98, P166, 32Mb RAM, 8x CD, 2Mb SVGA video card **We recommend:** P233, 24x CD Control, Keyboard, mouse **Advanced Graphics Support:** N/A



HERE PUSS PUSS...



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STAR TREK STARFLEET COMMAND

Where's the manual override?

With a production schedule as rapid as any Bollywood studio, yet another *Star Trek* game flashes towards the high street at maximum warp. More engrossing than a 'Tech War' novel and more tightly packed than William Shatner in a corset, *Star Trek: Starfleet Command* hoves into view as the best, and certainly the most strategic, of the *Star Trek* flight sim games to date.

There are six different races to

choose from within the game: Federation, Klingon, Romulan, Gorn, Hydran and Lyran, and all have very individual vessels, weapons and strategies: an area further expanded by the choice of early, middle or late era settings within the *Star Trek* universe. With the Federation, Klingon and Romulan scenarios you'll be in fairly familiar territory as you get to grips with the nuances of photon torpedoes, cloaks and disruptors, but with the Gorn, Lyran and Hydran races the weaponry and tactics become a little more exotic with Fusion Beams, Hellbores and the catchily-titled Expanding Sphere Generator to play with.

Whichever race you choose the single-player game allows you to pursue a campaign career: starting as a lowly Lieutenant Commander and working your way up to the heady ranks of Admiral. With a mission-based structure (which varies slightly depending on race) you can stay in your starting location, that is - Earth, or travel the galactic map in search of new life and new civilisations with which to fight. Your missions can vary from straightforward escort duties, investigating anomalies or aggressive engagements but, as you have a small



Battle stops for a moment as both sides attempt to outrun each other's missiles

arsenal at your disposal, even the most unadventurous mission briefing will invariably involve you having to blow the cornish pasty off a passing Klingon at some point.

Moving your ship is a simple affair, with a mouse-click left or right of your vessel to make it move accordingly. The default view, which places your ship centrally at the bottom of the screen, can be changed to follow your target or look down from overhead, and can also be adjusted so that your target is always visible on screen. It takes seconds to master, which is just as well because the rest of your

controls take longer to get the hang of.

At the left of the gameplay screen sits your ship controls: everything from power management to shuttle launches, and it's here that you'll begin to comprehend the true depth of this game. Play the Federation tutorials and you get an ominous inkling of what I mean when Sulu says: 'I hope you've read the manual'. He isn't joking. Without familiarising yourself with the myriad sub-systems and set-ups necessary to properly handle your ship, you'll be space dust before you can say 'engage emergency power.'

You have a crew at your disposal,



Though graphically different, all races utilise very similar control panels

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ALL



The Lyran 'Expanding Sphere Generator' is completely invisible... Until you fly into it

but everything must be overseen and managed by you while in flight, and each main system button allows access to a different and more detailed control panel. 'Helm' gives more control over your movements with fast turns and erratic course settings available, 'Engineering' lets you repair any damage to your vessel (if you've remembered to bring spare parts, that is) and 'Science and Defence' allow you to scan or probe any given target or set tractor beams to prevent any missiles targeting you. 'What missiles?' I hear you ask, 'I don't remember any missiles in *Star Trek*!' Well, neither do I, but that doesn't stop most ships in this universe from carrying either them or the even more obscure Electronic Counter Measures and Electronic Counter-Counter Measures – a system, thankfully easier to use than to

speak, designed to make your ship less easy to target. Added to that you can display overviews of both your ship and any targeted enemy which show shield strength, all the various weapon points and their charge rates. Each weapon can be adjusted to suit your combat demands: phasers set to overload, photons to explode in proximity of target and shields can be reinforced if there's a Watt of power left over once you've set everything else in motion. Transporters allow you to steal the spare parts you forgot to bring from your enemy, lay mines in his path, beam over marines to take out his vital systems and, if you've got a moment to spare, you might also want to deploy a few shuttles to act as sensor decoys or to harass the enemy. He'll be trying to do it to you.

Though *Star Trek: Starfleet*

Command is more 'do it yourself', than 'make it so', don't let that put you off. Most of your systems (and fleet orders if you've gone in mob-handed) can be set to suit your needs before you engage an enemy, and then it's down to strategy and timely use of the many offensive and defensive options to ensure you emerge victorious. The battles, with wonderfully rendered craft – flashing photons and phasers everywhere – can get fraught, frantic and occasionally frustrating as you pit your wits and weaponry against your enemy. Succeed and you can return to base with new-found prestige and, in this universe, prestige mean prizes as you can trade it in for more or better ships, new crew members and weaponry (see Starbase Shopping).

Star Trek: Starfleet Command is a challenging, well balanced and thoroughly absorbing game which, though it takes a little time to pick up, is deceptively difficult to put down again. Succeed in a *Star Fleet* career and you've barely scratched the surface as there are still five other races to be experienced, new ships and tactics to be mastered, custom skirmishes to be fought or friends to blow up via the Internet. This game boldly goes where no previous *Star Trek* game has gone before, so, if you're a fan: resistance is futile, go and buy it.

PROS: The best *Star Trek* space sim yet with heaps of game to play. Will appeal to *Trek* and strategy fans alike

CONS: Some may find the depth and required manual-reading a chore

Gordon Barrick

STARBASE SHOPPING



Between missions you can peruse your on-base equipment stores and trade your hard-earned prestige points for new ships, spare parts and missiles. Recruit more experienced crew members, however, and you'll earn extra prestige as well as improving ship efficiency

DETAILS

LABEL: Interplay

WEB: www.wie.co.uk

DEVELOPER: Quicksilver

PRICE: £34.99

MULTIPLAYER: Internet, IPX, TCP/IP

OUT: Now

AGE RATING: ELSPA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min installation: Windows 98, P200, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, 1Mb video card **We recommend:** PIII 300, 64+Mb RAM, 4Mb video card **Controls:** Keyboard, mouse **Advanced Graphics Support:** D3D, 3Dfx



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ABOMINATION - THE NEMESIS PROJECT

Save the world from mutagenic bacteria-infested monsters...



Almost everyone in the States is dead. Yes, even Jerry Springer. Wiped out in 72 hours by an airborne plague, which kills its victims by massive haemorrhaging and sprouty growths. Not at all nice, one would imagine. There are a few survivors, but the majority of people who haven't died belong to a cult - The Faithless. They have embraced the plague, as part of their worship of a monstrous set of homonclui - The Brood, and now roam the streets killing and destroying everything they find.

Enter your squad. Project Nemesis. Saved from infection by an enhanced immune system, your team of eight genetically engineered soldiers must bring about the end of The Faithless and The Brood, discover a cure for the disease and restore law and order to the USA. Oh, and while you're at it, try not to make too much mess!

It's a tall order, and the game is not easy. Fortunately you do have more than eight soldiers, in the form of raw recruits plucked from the surviving armed forces and police units, but they're not as tough as your squad,



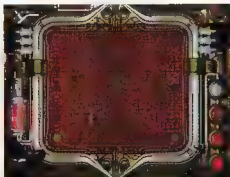
'Fancy a trip to the pub anyone?'

nor do they possess special skills. The Nemesis team, however, each have a unique ability to aid them in their missions. Savage, for example, has massive strength, Steel has extremely tough skin and Detonate can make anything explode. Most missions are limited to four units per squad, and you have to choose carefully - you can't afford to lose personnel.

The strategic element of the game takes place at the command centre, where incidents can be viewed on a satellite map, personnel equipped, reports analysed and so on. When a squad is called to action, the game becomes an isometric 3D, real-time campaign. You can, however, pause the action when the fighting gets a bit

furious, and give new orders in freeze frame. This provides a best of both worlds compromise between real-time and turn-based gaming.

Does any of this sound a bit like X-Com to you? It should. The development team have worked on the X-Com series and leveraged their experience to great effect. The missions are randomly generated and hence extremely unpredictable, the graphics suitably sickly and pulsating, and the sound and music atmospheric and enveloping (especially if you have EAX). The player and enemy AI is by far the best I've ever seen in a game of this type. Each character works out the best route to get where you want them to go, in the manner



Here the tactical map. Not a lot to look at there, but an awful lot to do

you told them to get there, and your enemies use cover and attack patterns to maximum effect. It is excellent.

Because the game is mainly real-time, it plays much faster than X-Com, and is considerably less complicated for the player, but for me, that lets the game down. Research is performed off-site, not by a team of scientists you've recruited and housed yourself, so it cannot be directed in one particular direction. There are also no opportunities to enhance your base, and almost all housekeeping elements have been removed. Some of you may well consider that an improvement, and believe me, Abomination is a cracking game, but for the hard-nosed strategy gamer, it doesn't quite hit the spot like X-Com.

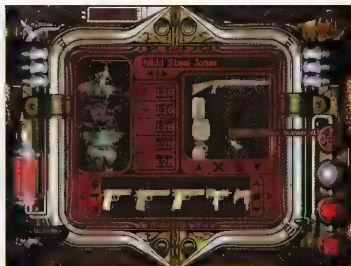
PROS: Great storyline, varied missions, well designed isometric 3D environment, brilliant AI

CONS: No research or base building opportunities for the X-COM die-hard

Mat Peck



Now what's the word I'm looking for... oh yes that's it, carnage!



Arm your agents with anything from Desert Eagle Magnum's to Rocket Launchers

DETAILS

LABEL: Eidos Interactive

WEB: www.hothouse.org

DEVELOPER: HoTHouse

PRICE: £34.99

MULTIPLAYER: Internet, LAN, modem

OUT: October

AGE RATING: ELSA 15+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 95/98, P166, 32MB RAM, 4X CD, 2MB video card, Soundblaster-compatible V6
Recommended: P133MMX, 64MB RAM, 4MB 3D Accelerator card, 8x CD, Soundblaster Live
Controls: Mouse, keyboard
Advanced Graphics Support: MMX, D3d, EAX Audi



ALAN DYKES ON...

For a long time now I've been waiting for an email or letter that says something like: 'Alan, seeing as you're a bit of a guru, can you tell me the best websites to go to so I can seem all worldly and knowledgeable about sports when I go down the pub.' Well that email has never arrived. However, in the vain hope that somebody out there has been thinking about it, but has never had time to put their fingers to their keyboard, here we go.

Let's start off with www.facarling.com, the official website for the Premiership. This site has recently undergone a major overhaul which makes it more complicated to navigate, but it contains more news-related information than before, as well as solid (if a bit po-faced) info on all the teams and fixtures. A year ago if you left out the 's', and typed www.facarling.com into your web browser you would have inadvertently entered a hardcore pornography site. Thankfully this seems to have been withdrawn, so to speak, and a good job too considering the age group of some of those likely to be looking for the real website.

A good example of a non-official website is the rather fine www.football365.co.uk. This is a news and information service that is updated on a daily basis and contains a comprehensive run-down of the latest news, personalised to your favourite club. All of the Premiership teams are currently represented, along with Rangers and Celtic from the Scottish Premiership and Blackburn, Charlton, Man City and Notts Forest from the 1st Division. There are discussion forums and you can also submit your own match report, following a template. And by the way, if I find out who signed me up for the Gunners' daily newsletter I'll skin 'em alive.

Cricket fans are served by a 365 day operation available via email at www.cricinfo365.co.uk. This is a comprehensive newsletter with reports from around the world and fixtures information. It is linked to the full Cricinfo site at www.uk.cricinfo.org, which is packed with even more information.

Rugby is not as well represented but I can highly recommend www.scrum.com. It has top class information on home nations rugby teams, as well as in-depth analysis on Australia, New Zealand and South Africa plus comprehensive run-downs of Tri-Nations, Super 12s, Eton Cup and of course the forthcoming Six Nations and World Cup. If you want the whole lowdown on what's happening Stateside then www.espn.com is the business, with all bases covered, even that strange foreign game, soccer.

The last word on motor racing on the web has to be the FIA website, or the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. This site has information on Formula 1, Formula 3000, Touring and GT, Rallies, Off-Road, Drag Racing and more. Bike sport fans should check out www.superbike.it and www.dorna.com for information on Superbikes and GP500 respectively.

Alan spends most of the day wasting Ziff Davis Internet bandwidth searching for the correct spelling of Croatian players' names, downloading .avi's of goals and touchdowns he's missed and obtaining obscure race lap times. You can reach him on alan_dykes@zd.com



...if I find out who signed me up for the Gunners' daily newsletter I'll skin 'em alive

KO BOXING

Out for the count



Time for that clever ear-biting manoeuvre

In the confused pugilistic scheme of things (WBO, IBF, WBA, WBC and anyone else who wants to join in if Don King will let them), KO Boxing is the equivalent of a junior ABA match in Bridlington Town Hall – low-budget, tatty and incapable of arousing much interest.

The format is predictable with a 'world championship' at stake, head-to-head, training and difficulty modes, and some boxers have different 'styles'. Sadly, the latter amounts to statistical differences in height, reach and haircut, and precious little from a gameplay perspective.

Controlling your fighter is easy. The number pad providing direction of blow or block and two keys assigned to offence or defence. But the fact that you can often win consecutive fights simply by holding down one punch key, or that your boxer's health can disappear before your eyes while the computer oppo-

nent throws nary a punch is indicative of the giddy heights of gameplay to which KO Boxing aspires. The boxing combinations only just climb above toe-curling, the 20 available boxers are charmless and uninspiring, the sound effects poor and the crowd graphics laughable.

Perhaps we've been spoiled by the levels of presentation and playability to which soccer, golf and other sports simulations have reached. Perhaps it's unfair to expect such a poorly represented PC sport as boxing to come in at anything like the same standard. Even so, I'd rather be marooned on a desert island with Chris Eubank than spend many more minutes in the Daily Star-sponsored KO Boxing ring.

Elvis 'Sugar Ray' Bacon

DETAILS

LABEL: Data Becker
WEB: www.data.becker.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Inhouse
PRICE: £29.99
MULTIPLAYER: via LAN and internet
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA all ages

Min Installation: P233, iwin 95/98, 32Mb Ram, D3D-compatible 3D accelerator, 2X CD-Rom Drive, DX6 compatible sound card
We recommend: Pentium 300, 64Mb Ram Control: keyboard, mouse, joystick Advanced Graphics Support: D3D



The excitement! I just can't take it...
 Thuumnkt!



NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000

Take it to the hoop

Now with better TV coverage than ever in the UK, the NBA is becoming perhaps the most followed US team sport this side of the Atlantic.

For those wanting to while away the off season playing on their PCs, the title of choice has always been EA Sports' NBA Live. This, Microsoft's NBA Inside Drive 2000, is a credible attempt at stealing possession and taking it to the hoop, but seems clinical in its execution.

Taking the pieces separately, it is difficult to seriously criticise the constituent parts of High Voltage's latest on-court outing. For the developers of the earlier understated, but ultimately very playable World League Basketball, this is a giant leap forward. The installation and menu screens are as slick as you'd expect from any product out of Redmond. Very nice animated menus are easy to navigate and take you through the practice, single game and season options. As with Baseball 2000, there is the chance to play Tonight's Game for a selection of instant action matchups, but the other extreme is limited to a full six month season with no compromise.

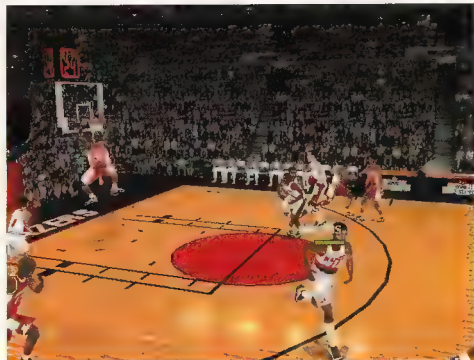
Out on court Inside Drive certainly looks All-Star. The players' faces are instantly recognisable, as are their characteristic moves. All



Keep tabs on your players throughout the season

the trademark slams and dunks are here, and setting up those alley-oops soon becomes second nature. Not that you'll have much chance on the higher difficulty levels, as the AI is quick on its feet. The computer is quick to capitalise on your mistakes, so plenty of practice is required. To make life easier, the rookie level is far more forgiving and it is possible to vary the level of control for that true arcade feel. Three different modes are included for player switching, depending on your style. The Role-Play mode allows you to take complete control of a single player throughout the game, which makes for an engrossing experience.

Cunning playmasters are able to take advantage of the coaching options, which features an NBA playbook from which you can choose your team's particular armoury. The play diagrams are clear and calling them in-game is done by hitting the appropriate number key. It is also possible to



Every NBA dunk in the book, and all available in glorious replay

adjust the tempo, intensity, defensive pressure and rebounding aggressiveness as you see fit. Overall playability seems convincing, with the ebb and flow changing from well-rehearsed plays to opportunistic fast breaks in the blink of an eye.

The play-by-play and colour commentary adds to the game tremendously, and is every bit as good as the EA's celebrity mouths. Kevin Calabro and Marques Johnson are both amusing at times, and follow the play well. The crowd noises are also context-sensitive with oohs and aahs accompanying the usual cheers. What is missing is the pumping organ music to rouse the fans, and the good old 'Charge' and 'De-

Fence' encours that are synonymous with NBA events.

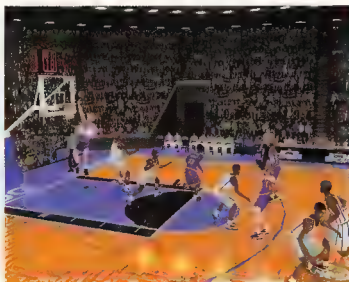
This is where NBA Inside Drive 2000 just falls short of taking down the almighty NBA Live franchise. Every element of the game is reproduced remarkably well, but it fails to fully capture the razzmatazz atmosphere that is what sets the NBA apart from basketball everywhere else in the World. But it does undoubtedly offer great aesthetics and very solid gameplay at a bargain price.

PROS: Solid and refined recreation of the sport at a great price

CONS: Somewhat lacks the sheer energy of EA's stalwart
Kenji Takeda



Take it to straight to the hoop, but it's rarely that simple



Wide open, and making no mistake - that's gotta' hurt

DETAILS

LABEL: Microsoft
WEB: www.microsoft.com
DEVELOPER: High Voltage
PRICE: £19.99
MULTIPLAYER: On same PC
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA all ages

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 98, P-66, 32Mb RAM, 6x CD, DirectX 6.0-compatible SVGA video and soundcard
We recommend: PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 16x CD, 3D accelerator card
Control: joystick, gamepad, mouse, keyboard
Supports: D3D, Force Feedback



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MADDEN NFL 2000

Get your big bad shoulder pads...

One of the principle reasons I like reviewing American sports games is that I get a perverse pleasure out of pissing off sub-editors. Subs are universally known as walking, talking (and shouting if your copy is late) Oxford Dictionaries. They are sadists for spelling, guardians of grammar – and it's not often that they let me alliterate, either. Lord forbid an Americanism making it past their watchful eyes. But spellings like offense and defense go hand in hand with Madden NFL 2000 and its ilk, and I have a Harvard English Dictionary to prove it.

Madden NFL 2000 features the 1999 season, plus single games, a franchise coaching/playing mode, a custom tournament mode and a so-called Situation mode. The latter allows you to enter into crucial moments of great games like the 1982 Dolphins/Chargers game where the teams were tied at 38 points with three and a half minutes left on the clock. The Chargers went on to win the game, and you've got to pit your skills against the Dolphins to see if you can do it too. You can also set up custom situations.

The basic game engine and control procedures have changed little in the past year, although graphically there is a noticeable difference, with marginally improved animations – especially in the ball-catching, running, and tackling areas. Sideline celebrations are also quite fun. Players now look bigger or smaller, depending on their position – most of the defensive and



offensive linemen look massively, comically overweight (the Raiders look like killer whales), while receivers are tiny in comparison.

The higher the resolution your PC is capable of, the more of a treat you're in for, with Voodoo owners in for the biggest thrill (the latest compatible Glide drivers are included on the disc). Voodoo3 cards capable of showing it at a decent frame rate in 1024x768 are awesome for this game, though some of the stadium features still aren't anything to write home about. On the subject of graphics, I experienced regular screen corruption problems with a Savage4 Pro card which didn't appear when I played with the Riva and Voodoo cards. Lower-res cards or the software graphics mode make Madden NFL 2000 less pretty, but just as playable.

The system of controlling and throwing to anything up to six receivers remains in place from last year, and either their routing has got slightly better or I have, because my passing average is up, year on year. So also is my running average – the defense seems to have softened up to the run, which is a pity because I



Top left: The Chargers intercept Miami in the 80s. Above: Follow those big blockers

thought that last year's game had got that aspect of the game right. This will suit those who are after the thrill of a higher scoring, higher yardage game, but I think it's a step back from the realism last year's game seemed to have incorporated.

If someone asked me for a genuine appraisal of what the biggest difference between Madden 99 and Madden 2000 is then I'd have to say 'fatter players'. It's also true that in animation terms it's more exciting, and the menus and interface are neater and more PC-like (and I'm talking personal computer here, not politically correct – last year's menus looked like they were straight off the PlayStation, which I think they actually were). The situation mode is also interesting, though even an American Football enthusiast, like myself, finds it hard to remember some of the titanic clashes it had before, so this side of the Atlantic it's likely to have limited and purely novelty appeal. And I don't like the softening-up of the defense, at all.

Madden 99 was a challenging game and a five star one, at that. I'm going to give this version four stars because it's still an excellent game and features minor improvements in some areas –

like fat players – but given advance warning, I doubt I'd buy it if I was the proud possessor of its predecessor. Americans I've spoken to can't figure out why we keep buying new versions of FIFA that they consider to be of little difference to the original, and this is the way I feel about Madden 2000. Be in no doubt though – Big John still rules the gridiron genre. **PROS:** Improved graphics, great game engine, lots of receivers, plenty of play modes. John Madden's commentary **CONS:** Not a massively significant improvement on last year's version. Don't like the softened-up run defense **Alan Dykes**



Selection menus will be familiar.



Passing works well – unless you're sacked

DETAILS

LABEL: EA Sports

WEB: www.easports.com

DEVELOPER: In-house

PRICE: £34.99

MULTIPLAYER: LAN, Null Modem, Internet

OUT: Now

AGE RATING: ELSPA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min installation: Windows/9x, P400, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, DirectX-compatible sound and graphics. We recommend: PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D graphics accelerator, 30fps preferable. Controls: Keyboard, gamepad. Supports: D3D, Glide



MICROSOFT BASEBALL 2000

Microsoft pitches convincingly against EA Sports



The players look fantastic, and the grounds all look the part, too

After a modest start last season, Microsoft's sports line-up is beginning to mature. Baseball 2000 is clearly aimed at stealing the pennant from EA's Triple Play series.

The graphics are certainly up to scratch, with recognisable players who aren't all angular robots. This is because Wizbang Productions uses about five times as many polygons than were used in Triple Play 2000, and the movement is very convincing. Together with the beautifully rendered stadia, this puts Baseball 2000 right on top in the beauty stakes.



Hitting the sweet spot on the bat requires considerable skill, but makes home runs all the more satisfying

Of course, beauty is more than skin-deep, and this is where the game is truly tested. While definitely at the action-end of the spectrum, there's a good deal of realism when it comes to batting. On the easiest level it's simply a matter of timing, but on intermediate and advanced it's possible to move both the batter and swing location to unleash some diverse hits. And when the ball comes off the bat it sails, dives and bobbles in a natural manner.

The pitching interface is simple and, depending on the skill of the pitcher, hitting the corners can be a real challenge. However, the ability to pitch 120mph fastballs reveals the action nature of the game. Fielding and baserunning can be automated or handled manually, but don't expect any major surprises from the AI managers.

To help you get up and running quickly, there is the excellent Tonight's Game feature which lists that days scheduled games. The Home Run Derby and in-game Practice Mode are



also nicely done, although the Season Play only offers the first 162-game stretch and no compromise.

Microsoft Baseball 2000 is certainly a big improvement over last year's effort, and at only twenty quid is a solid stand-up-double for Microsoft Sports.

Kenji Takeda

DETAILS

LABEL: Microsoft
WEB: www.microsoft.com/sports/baseball2000
DEVELOPER: Wizbang Productions
PRICE: £19.99
MULTIPLAYER: 1-2 (Same PC only)
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 98 P133, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, DirectX-compatible SVGA video and sound card
We recommend: PII 266, 32Mb RAM, 3D accelerator card
Controls: joystick, gamepad, mouse, keyboard
Supports: CDJ, Force Feedback

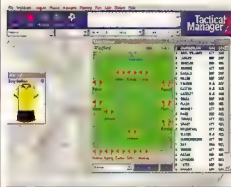


TACTICAL MANAGER 2

With the new season now in full swing, the anticipated deluge of footie games has begun in earnest and one of this season's new signings is Tactical Manager 2 from Talking Birds. The game is database-style footie management and certainly sets its sights high: there are 1,050 clubs to explore in over 30 different national leagues, and it features some nice touches like the player profiles.

However 'at the end of the day', to quote Big Ron, Tactical Manager 2 belongs more to the Tinpot Budget Conference rather than any PC Premier League. No game can survive with such uninteresting match sequences, poor presentation and distinct lack of involvement. The Windows-style interface which is meant to promote ease of use, is rather bland and perfectly in tune with the lack of atmosphere generated elsewhere by the game. True, it's full of statistics, but then so is Excel, and I suspect few will get any joy here. Champ Man, it ain't.

John Houlihan



A statistician's dream come true

DETAILS

LABEL: Bright Star
WEB: www.talking-birds.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Talking Birds
PRICE: £24.99
MULTIPLAYER: Same machine, Internet
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Windows 98/NT, P75, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, DirectX graphics and sound
We recommend: P200, 64Mb RAM, Control Mouse
Supports: None



CAL JONES ON...

Every September, the games industry assembles under the great glass roof at Olympia on the pretext of unveiling the hot new titles for Christmas and the New Year. The European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) was once a modest and informal affair where the aim was to be invited to all the best parties and consume as much alcohol as possible. If the resulting hangover wasn't too bad, you might even get to see some games.

But things have changed. Nowadays, ECTS resembles a vast, high-tech Dante's Inferno, complete with demons (well, there's usually at least one poor bugger sweating to death in a rubber 'Horny from Dungeon Keeper' suit), dancing girls (a given on the Acclaim stand) and damned souls (well, how else would you describe all those panting males crammed into the Eidos stand in the hope of catching a glimpse of the new Lara Croft model?). Most of the small, friendly companies have been assimilated by corporate giants such as Electronic Arts and Infogrames, and the emphasis is less on games and more on who has the biggest, noisiest stand with the most brazen rent-a-bimbos. In other words, who can flash the most cash.

So where do adventure and role-playing games fit into this? Back in the days when creating games was little more than a cottage industry, adventures and roleplaying games thrived – the fortunes of companies such as Sierra, LucasArts and Origin were founded on these genres – and continued to do so into the early 90s. I remember my first ECTS in Spring 1993. Doom hadn't happened yet, and the big talk was about the first-ever pre-rendered, CD-only adventure – 7th Guest, the latest LucasArts point and clicker, Day Of The Tentacle, and an epic roleplaying game from Interplay called Stonekeep.

Flash forward five years and it's all first-person shooters and real-time strategy games. Adventures? No interest. Roleplaying games? Forget it.

But these things are cyclical. A small company kept the faith and produced a game which revived interest in the fantasy roleplaying genre. That game was Diablo, and now Blizzard is gearing up to release a sequel. Likewise, BioWare has Baldur's Gate II in the works and Origin is starting to hype up Ultima IX: Ascension. The games industry is profit-driven. If Diablo and Baldur's Gate had received only modest business, their publishers wouldn't have put up the cash for a sequel. But they sold. Now, not only do we have sequels, but other companies are coming up with roleplaying games of their own: Infogrames has a promising title called Soulbringer (one of the Gremlin titles it bought), Activision, as reported last issue, has Vampire The Masquerade, Westwood is developing a Diablo-style game called Nox, Delphine has just released Darkstone and there are many others.

All we need is a big-selling adventure to revitalise this genre too. Grim Fandango did well in America, and not too badly here, but we really need more games like that to keep the renaissance going.

Comments or questions on adventure & roleplaying games? Write to Cal or email her on cal_jones@zd.com



ECTS resembles a high-tech Dante's Inferno – complete with demons

SYSTEM

RPG meets Quake? You better believe it!



While holding the black ops Psi amp in front, looting this body reveals a security card

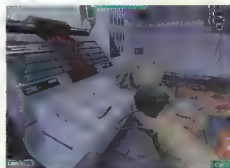
System Shock 2 is another exciting entry in the genre crossover stakes, blending the first-person shooter and the roleplaying game. Looking Glass Studios appears to have finally succeeded in the impossible – creating a thinking person's Quake. Or is it a roleplaying game for people who bore easily? Who cares, the first game was superb and the sequel has had us on tenterhooks for too long to debate semantics of genre.

System Shock 2 places the player firmly in the first-person perspective via Looking Glasses' in-house developed Dark Engine of Thief, fame. While this engine isn't pushing back the barriers of 3D technical trickery, the game still looks fantastic largely due to the lavish work on architectural detail and high-resolution textures, which gives the game a crisp, gritty sci-fi look. Exactly the sort of look you'd expect in a cyberpunk-themed future on a spacecraft under siege from all things that slither and clank.

There still remains a good deal of first-person shooter clichés, such as

bust-up buildings and some form of human/alien/machine hybrid beings mindlessly trying to destroy us. If that were all there was then System Shock 2 would probably still be a good game. However, the roleplaying game elements makes the experience vastly more interesting. From the outset, the player selects what sort of character they want to play by entering basic training as a Marine, Navy sailor or a Psionic Op.

There's a novel approach to expanding your stats and skills in System Shock 2: rather than experience adding to those, it's all about implants and cybernetic modules. There are handy upgrade stations around the place that will update



Blimey, I asked for a Psi hypo – not an arm as well

SHOCK 2



More bodies... In this room we need to reprogram the Systems Monitoring Unit to flush some radiation elsewhere...

your hero's cybernetic rig at will. The problems are there's never enough cybernetic modules to go around, so the player needs to choose in which disciplines to specialise.

Initially, System Shock 2 looks just like a first-person shooter with weapons held out front in view. But hitting tab reveals the hidden complexity in Inventory mode. This enables a mouse pointer that you can use to pick up objects, and using an inventory item on something in the real game involves dragging the item to the object in the real world. It's a simple and effective system, the only caveat is that in battle, weapons are prone to run out of ammo or jam completely. Going into the inventory to sort something out often results in death, while you can't rotate your view point (although you can still move with the movement keys). Just

imagine someone backing off from an attacker, rummaging around in their rucksack for that big gun...

System Shock 2 is a miserly game – you can't run around the game with the same gun that's for sure. Mechanical weapons degrade at an alarming rate, too. Unless the player is

equipped with a maintenance skill and is fortunate enough to find some disposable maintenance tools, using a weapon until it jams and then throwing it away is the only way to go. The base level offensive Psionic ability, Cryokinesis, is handy being ammo-free, but Psi hypos are even harder to



We can either try and find the keycode or... we can hack it. A nice little Psi ability to boost Cyber affinity certainly helps the process

find than ammo.

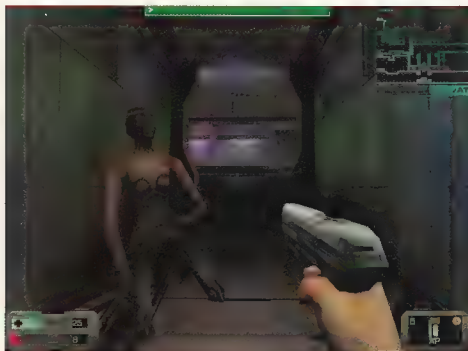
It's unique to System Shock 2 that you can find a deadly weapon... but you can't use it because you don't have the skill. It's quite frustrating at times and after finding a light sabre-type device that required a massive energy skill of six to use, I found that it costed an extortionate 50 cyber modules, which is a serious effort of hoarding in the face of so many stats and skills – which need shoring up, as well. This is one game that you're going to replay from the beginning to play in a totally different way.

A good example will be to describe the variety of skills that I used to complete the game. Firstly I had a hefty level of Psionics – Cryokinesis being excellent to dispatch low-level nasties, security cameras and the like. Pyrokinesis happened to be handy for dispatching harder bad guys with

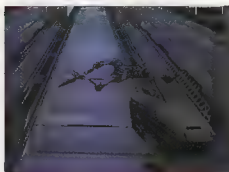


Top of the hud contains the inventory and equipped items, while the bottom activates menus such as the map on the right





Regular bullets aren't much use on this cyborg midwife, so my trusty handgun is loaded with armour-piercing rounds.



one blast. An anti-entropic Psionic ability stopped any guns from degrading so long as I remembered to use it before firing them. A pistol with armour piercing bullets was just the trick for turrets and robots. I also kept a modified laser pistol for when I'd run out of ammo and was low on Psi. Not to mention a grenade launcher if the going got tough. The EMP grenades, in particular, are very handy against some of the nasty cyborg creatures. I also used an exotic weapon (which I won't name) to smack mutants around mêlée-style. That's a lot of inventory given over to weaponry but I couldn't really get by without it, and I found that ammo depletion was quite even. Armour is a serious inventory gobbler too, not helped by the fact that I kept a hazard suit handy for those toxic situations

As a first-person shooter, the controls are a little odd – more sensitive to up/down than left/right. The first

task you come across is a physical one and it requires some solid first-person shooter-timed manoeuvring skills. The action aspect of the game is part of the fun and not just a bolt on to the roleplaying game workings. That said, the monsters are fairly predictable but the challenge is not that of a regular first-person shooter – it's all about switching to an appropriate weapon to deal with them before they get to you.

System Shock 2 is very engrossing to play. It's clever at threading the player back through some of the levels already visited. The game demands that you pay attention to detail and it certainly provides it. There's an incredible array of things to find and learn how to use. It strikes me that here lies the key trick of the game – it's more of an exploration romp than a monster-slaying exercise – though the latter is definitely part of the fun. There's nothing quite like

slaying a cyborg midwife with the assault rifle after saving up modules for half the game to be able to use it.

Atmosphere-wise, I've not been this scared since Half-Life. Spooky twilight tunes set the scene, corpses lay everywhere and creatures burst out of crevices. By the end stages of the game, I was a walking embodiment of paranoia. There's a lot of scene-setting speech in the game. Not only the recorded logs and email briefings, but it seems that the nasties wandering around have plenty to say to themselves when they don't know you're around. That's another nice touch in a game that feels like it's made of thousands of nice touches tied out to end.

System Shock 2 is absolutely superb. There, I've said it. It's opened a can of worms in PC gaming just as did Half-Life. From this moment on it will be hard for anyone to release a first-person shooter or roleplaying

game that doesn't look pale by comparison — unless they're heavily influenced by this game, that is. One last piece of advice: read your logs and pay attention. If you're easily frustrated, play it on easy mode. A multiplayer cooperative patch is said to be coming and we'll have it on the cover CD as soon as it's released. You should go out right now and buy System Shock 2 — immediately!

PROS: The most significant advance to the first-person shooter – adding depth and subtlety to a genre not exactly noted for it – since Half-Life

CONS: Can be frustrating if you want to see and use everything you come across

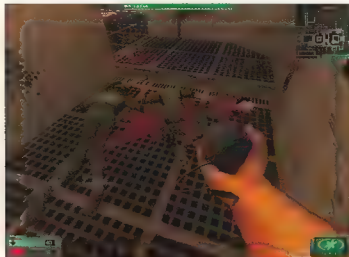
Mat Bettinson

METALS

LABEL: Electronic Arts
WEB: www.shock2.com
DEVELOPER: Looking Glass Studios
PRICE: £34.99
MULTIPLAYER: None
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSPA 11+

SYSTEM

Min Installation: Wings/98, P166, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, D3D-compatible graphics card **We recommend:** P2 300, 128Mb RAM, TNT-based graphics or 3Dfx Voodoo 2, or better **Control:** Keyboard, mouse **Supports:** D3D, DirectSound3D, EAX



Yet more bodies, there are a lot of them lying around! On the right you can see a log entry which is also received in spoken word

NAOMI MACKAY ON...

It's absolutely typical. We finally get some summer, and where am I? Inside a rather hot and sweaty Olympia at the biggest games show of the year, ECTS. Still, it was worth the mild dehydration to take a look at what will be on the shelves at Christmas.

Hasbro has quite a lot of goodies in store for the classic/puzzle gamer. Look out for the Millennium version of Trivial Pursuit, due in the shops around November. The graphics have been tarted up a bit and there are obviously loads of new questions. But there's an added bonus – once it brings out a new version of a game like this, you should expect to see the previous version go into the budget range – which means you'll only have to hand over a tenner for the original CD version.

The same goes for Cluedo. The third edition of the game – entitled Cluedo Chronicles – takes us back to the 30s for some Agatha Christie-style clue-solving. In an adventure game format, you can stroll around the cruise ship interacting with characters and picking up clues. Cluedo fans should also look out for the previous version going budget range before Christmas. And while we're on Cluedo, there's an email version that should be hitting your screens around October (expect to pay around a tenner for the privilege). X-COM is the flagship title in the latest releases in email format.

Obviously, as we're on the slippery slope towards Christmas, kids' software is big news. The Learning Company has got off to a great start, aiming a new *Sesame Street* title at children as young as nine months. Clearly they don't expect parents to plonk their little ones in front of the screen and leave them to it – the idea is that the adults control the screen and then the kids can just move the mouse or bash the keyboard to make stuff happen. In *Sesame Street Baby & Me*, they can play peek-a-boo with Ernie, who pops out from behind the sofa or under the table whenever they hit any key – well, if you can catch 'em young...

Possibly the coolest thing at the show was the Lego's Droid Developer Kit. Anyone who longed for one of those little motors that made your Lego creations come to life will be absolutely drooling over this. You actually build your very own R2D2. It has its own microcomputer called a microscout, which has seven built-in programmes – the programs differ from droid to droid. Aimed at kids aged nine and upwards – although I suspect there'll be plenty of adults who, having handed over their go quid, won't let any kids near it – the maker claims you can build your first droid in just half an hour. If you really get into it, you can add a programmable Lego brick, which lets you program your droid from a PC – to move, act and think on its own. This is possibly the only thing that will lure me away from the light-sabres in Toys R Us. Incidentally, does anyone know where you can get the two-bladed light-sabres like Darth Maul's? If you do, please email me!

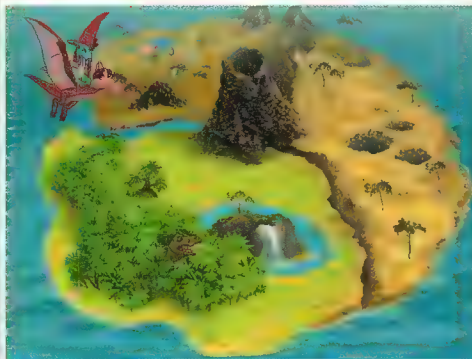


The coolest thing at ECTS was the Droid Developer kit – you get to build your own R2D2

Comments or questions on classics & puzzle games? Write to Naomi or email her on pcgw_mail@zd.com

DINOSAUR ADVENTURE 3-D

Dino-poor-us



Fly into Paleo Island with a parasarolophus called Rolf and his friend Pterrance, and choose from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods

A Jurassic lark for four to eight-year olds, *Dinosaur Adventure 3D* should never really have made it out of the cretaceous period.

At first glance it appears to have all the right ingredients to convince kids of this age group that they're having fun. Dinosaurs have, since the evolution of Jurassic Park, been the staple diet for kids of all ages. Children who have barely learned to speak can recite tongue twisters like diplodocus and velociraptor. But this adventure does little to keep their attention. They are helped around the dinosaur land by an annoyingly perky little American parasarolophus called Rolf and his friend Pterrance, the pteradon.

The aim is to go around the island, finding the hidden dinosaur eggs, and collect hatching crystals, which, when you have accumulated three, allow you to hatch out your baby dinosaur. To win the crystals, you

complete games such as scrambled eggs, where you have to match the dino babies inside the eggs with another egg containing the same dino baby.

The games are uninspired, and the 'video' sequences that tell you more about certain dinosaurs, uninformative. The creators have underestimated just how much knowledge some eight-year-olds have amassed on the subject of palaeontology.

While the knowledge level is too low for the higher end of the age group, those at the lower end of the group may find the interaction to difficult and need an adult to play along with them.

Naomi Mackay

DETAILS

LABEL: Knowledge Adventure
WEB: www.knowledgeadventure.co.uk
DEVELOPER: Knowledge Adventure
PRICE: £19.99
MULTIPLAYER: N/A
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages
SYSTEM
 Min Installation: Windows/98, Pgo, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD, MPC-compatible soundcard
 We recommend: P166, 32Mb RAM Control: Keyboard, Mouse Advanced Graphics Support: None



BARBIE SUPER SPORTS

Barbie goes downhill



Forget elbow and knee pads – Barbie always falls on her most padded area

Be a Barbie girl in a Barbie world with this latest from Mattel's Barbie stable. In-line skating and snowboarding are the two cool sports on offer for players. And, of course, the greatest sport of them all – shopping!

Players begin in the sports shop, where they can buy cool outfits and skates or snowboards. The more levels you get through out on the park or the snowfields, the more tickets you earn and the better clothes you can buy. And the snowboards and skates perform greater tricks and stunts the more you pay for them (if only that were true in real life).

Courses are well designed, allowing younger players to easily manoeuvre their Barbie girls, while there are enough tricks and stunts to keep older participants happy. The skating courses are particularly well designed – Barbie and her friends jump up and skim along a hand rail, do somersaults over fountains and spin and skate backwards. Oh, and they fall over well too! Snowboarders have to collect snowflakes, knock down snowmen and collect the Barbie Bs to earn extra points. Avoid the obstacles in the skate park (including banana peel that slips you up), jump over fountains to get them spouting water and find hidden areas.

There's a two-player option that allows races or timed competitions against another character, plus an instant replay facility, so that you can view any particularly cool moves again. You can even take snapshots to look at later. And there's a choice of music to play along to as well.

There's enough action and challenge in this game to keep even those girls who aren't that mad about Barbie, happy for some time. And it's an easy introduction to more complicated skiing and snowboarding games. Oh, and there's another good thing: Ken isn't there. I never could understand why Barbie would choose him.

Naomi MacKay

DETAILS

LABEL: Mattel Media
WEB: www.mattel.com
DEVELOPER: in-house
PRICE: £24.99
MULTIPLAYER: Same PC
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min Install: ation Wings/98, P166, 32MB RAM, 8xCD, 16bit graphics card with 2MB RAM, 16bit SoundBlaster or compatible **We recommend:** P200, 32MB RAM **Control:** Keyboard, mouse **Support:** N/A

★ ★ ★

FORESTIA - THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Take a walk on the wild side



Collecting all sorts of nuts along the way

The Eastenders Omnibus may have replaced the country walk as a family Sunday staple, but French publisher LaserMedia makes a fair stab at injecting some greenery into the lives of today's kids with Forestia – The Great Adventure.

Based around three days and nights in an enchanted wood, Forestia combines a nature trail with a set of activities ranging from number puzzles, adventure-style games with insects and even a junior first-person shoot 'em up in an ants nest – actually more of a dress 'em up as you switch disguises to avoid the attentions of various insects. Each game is hosted in a different part of the forest, forcing the seven-to-twelve year-old user to investigate the entire wood, photographing fauna and collecting flora as they go.

Your guide around the prettily rendered wood is Sam the rabbit, the slightly hyperactive 'Vagabond of the Woods' who introduces you to pastoral premier DaddyOak and his slim sidekick Birch. Honest.

Complete all nine puzzles and you earn yourself an invite to the forest fair, but the real reward of Forestia will be as an introduction to nature.

As you enter each still frame of the forest, an animated animal or bird may pop its head from round a tree, giving you time to grab the camera and photograph it. Click on the scrapbook button and you'll find your snap, accompanied by supplied notes about the creature's habitat and habits. The natural history features support the National Curriculum Sciences Key Stage 1 & 2 and, since finding all the animals and flowers seems much harder than solving the puzzles, this will keep interested youngsters hunting for some time.

Rhys Lewis

DETAILS

LABEL: Wavehill Software
WEB: N/A
DEVELOPER: LaserMedia
PRICE: £29.99
MULTIPLAYER: None
OUT: Now
AGE RATING: ELSA All Ages

SYSTEM

Min Install: ation Wings/98, P166, 8MB Ram, 4x CD, Mac 8MB Ram **We recommend:** P200, 16MB RAM **Control:** Mouse, keyboard **Advanced Graphics Support:** N/A

★ ★ ★

RE-RELEASES

COMPILATIONS

DIAMOND RACING 1

(Diamond Collection, £24.99, ★★★★★)

The first of two automotive-themed compilation packs, Diamond Racing 1 kicks off with DMA Design's superb Grand Theft Auto. This top-down perspective game looks a little old fashioned, but the gameplay, in which you steal cars, perform hits and run people over, is a real blast. Sitting alongside this is Street Racer, an arcade-style racing game featuring wacky vehicles, courses and stunts. It's fun, though don't expect anything remarkable. Finally we have Network Q RAC Rally, a top-class rally game although it has since been eclipsed by Colin McRae.

DIAMOND RACING 2

(Diamond Collection, £24.99, ★★★★★)

The second pack starts with Carmageddon, the ultimate bad taste racing game. Harking back to the cult movie, *Death Race 2000*, Carmageddon is a race to the death. You score points for running over pedestrians and cows – with extra marks for style – and for shunting your rivals until their cars explode.

Graphically it's a little dated but still fun, running nicely on most of the slower Pentiums. Also included is Gremlin's Hardcore 4x4, a competent arcade-style off-road racing game. This one's best enjoyed with a 3D card. Finally, we have Speed Haste, and although moderately diverting, it's unlikely to command as much attention as the other two.

ACTION

DUKE NUKEM 3D COMPILATION

(Replay, £14.99, ★★★★★)

Duke's looking a bit long in the tooth these days, but he's still quick with a witty retort. This venerable 3D shooter is based around 3D Realms' Build Engine, which looks antiquated next to Quake, but it's great fun and there are some cool weapons such as the trip wire and the shrink gun. This edition also comes bundled with two, fun add-ons, DC and Caribbean.

ULTIMATE RACE PRO

(Hasbro £9.99, ★★★★★)

Kalisto's neat arcade racer is for the solo player, with smooth graphics and good controls. There are five tracks: four in the US and one near Kalisto's

Bordeaux HQ, plus an arena level for multiplayer. It doesn't sound much, but the variety is nice and it's good for the price.

STRATEGY & WAR BATTLESHIP

(Hasbro Classics, £9.99, ★★★★★)

Based on the classic Battleship board game, you might think this would be a waste of time. However, in addition to the basic game, there's also a very sophisticated strategy title which is sufficiently challenging for wargamers used to more complex fare. The accompanying animations are cute, and the appeal has diminished little since it was released. Certainly well worth a look.

WORMS UNITED

(Hasbro Classics, £9.99, ★★★★★)

The original Worms, (plus extra levels in this case) is a deserved classic. The graphics are basic, but the concept is flawless. Take control of a team of four gun-toting worms and face off against two to four enemy teams as you take turns to blast each other off the map. With the added bonus of being able to run on a 486, it's already been out on budget for two years. Best played

with one PC, three friends and copious amounts of booze.

TRANSPORT TYCOON DELUXE

(Hasbro Classics, £9.99, ★★★★★)

Long before he started writing games about rollercoasters, Chris Sawyer produced Transport Tycoon, a game in which you build and manage a rail and road network. The rail building is a tad fiddly but otherwise this is a great game. One of the best business/management sims around, this is diverting in the extreme.

XCOM: APOCALYPSE

(Hasbro Classics, £9.99, ★★★★★)

Top-quality squad-based strategy game in which you take control of an international force formed to repel hostile alien attack. Each mission sees you in charge of a squad of soldiers, and you must locate and destroy or capture the marauding ETs. Between missions, you maintain your base and research new technologies to keep up with the aliens. You can play the combat sections as turn-based or real-time, but must choose at the beginning of the missions. A great game, if not the most spectacular, visually.

ADVERTISING INDEX

BT Wipey	131,131,135	www.wipey.co.uk
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MS baseball 2000	116	★★★★	
Tactical Manager	116	★	
ADVENTURE & ROLEPLAYING			
System Shock 2	118	★★★★	
CLASSICS, PUZZLES & KIDS' GAMES			
Dinosaur adventure 3D	121	★★	
Forestry - the great adventure	122	★★★	
Barbie - Super Sports	122	★★★★	

TOP GEAR

LABTEC ATX-5820

The busy high-end monitor market gains yet another member with the debut of the Labtec ATX-5820 setup. The system is essentially the existing APX-4620 with the addition of virtual Dolby Surround. That's a proper Dolby Surround processor, but eschewing four speakers in favour of two with some clever processing to give the impression of sound coming from behind. We reviewed the APX-4620 system in the April issue and were impressed with its grunt, but not so much with its lack of mid-range detail. The speaker setup is largely identical, with two fairly large greyish white satellites for the desk and a big, black cubic mushroom subwoofer to sit on the floor and do the hard work. Controls are on the front of the right satellite, along with microphone in and headphone out. The satellites can be stood on a

desktop or monitor mounted with the supplied right-angle brackets.

Bass, treble and volume controls are joined by additional controls for Dolby Surround and, separately, the Labtec 'Spatializer' system. Spatializer is a kind of surround system itself, which attempts to give the impression of the sound coming from all around you at once. It's a generic effect though, and doesn't include any notion of discrete rear channels or effects steering. Hence the 4-mode Dolby processor.

The basic sound of the system is pretty good. Whilst mid range sound could (again) be richer, bass is tight and there's plenty of it allied to reasonable treble detail. The surround effects are competent, but not a true sub-

stitute for rear speakers. With volumes even below 50% we were somewhat alarmed by shimmering on the monitor screen as a result of interference from the satellites when monitor mounted. They're supposed to be magnetically shielded, and shouldn't affect the monitor at all. Such interference is unlikely to do your monitor any good, so we'd recommend desktop duty for the satellites.

It seems an odd time to suddenly include Dolby processing, as 3D soundcards are becoming standard issue anyway (if you

have a 3D soundcard it does the same clever 'surround from 2 speakers' trick with ordinary speakers). The sound is overall pretty good, and particularly well suited to first-person shooters where big bass and good detail are of paramount importance. But the Dolby processing seems likely a solution looking for a problem, and the shielding of the satellites needs sorting. Worth a look for arcade gamers, but if you've got a good 3D sound card then check out the cheaper APX-4620s first. CP

Labtec
Web: www.Labtec.com
Price: £149 99
Pros: Full blooded sound with plenty of power
Cons: Mid range a little hollow, doozy magnetic shielding
★ ★ ★

GAME COMMANDER

Have you ever wanted to shout at your PC? Well here's the solution. Game Commander is a piece of voice recognition software tailored to run with games and allows you to bark orders down a microphone instead of twacking your keyboard. Its application is in games that involve keyboard shortcuts as a means of accessing functions during the game. The idea being that you avoid taking your concentration off the game to find the 'five' key to select that team and instead shout FIVE! which the Game Commander software picks up, interprets and virtually presses the five key for you.

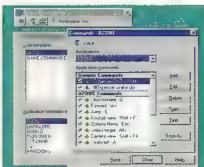
The software is easy to install and the pack we reviewed features a decent Labtec headset

microphone. It comes pre-configured with commands for a wide variety of games including Quake II, StarCraft, Battlezone and Warlords III Darklords Rising and it pretty much does what it says on the box in that it recognises commands for these games without any voice training. The commands are invariably one word and a fairly innocuous one at that, and the software seems pretty tolerant of regional pronunciation. In the worst case voice recognition training is possible though, so confusion can be cleared up.

I can't understand why anyone would want to give voice commands to a game like Warlords III as it's turn based and not terribly time sensitive, however Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six is an ideal candidate - imagine shouting go codes to your cohorts. There is a function that allows

you to create your own voice commands for a game which should allow you to do this. Should, but doesn't - well it didn't for me anyway. Success here will depend on a particular game's relationship with Windows - whether you can Alt-Tab out, other programs running in the background and the amount of RAM. Rainbow Six refused to play ball and so did Hidden & Dangerous. Then I gave up. This is a pity because: a) it would have been nice to use it and b) shouting commands at your screen annoys other people, which is always worthwhile. However, new game setups (trial version) are downloadable from the Game Commander website (where a trial version exists).

Although keyboard shortcuts are a pain to learn they quickly become intuitive so in the final analysis I'm not convinced I'd



use this on a regular basis. With the right game you might. It's an interesting technology and it's well worth checking out the trial version. AD

Mindmaker Inc
Web: www.gamecommander.com
Price: £39 99
Pros: Works well enough with supplied conf gs
Cons: Wouldn't work for me with the games I really wanted it to work on
★ ★ ★

KILLER RIGS

REVIEWS XTRA

TWO RECIPES FOR THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

It's quite simple really. If you said 'here's a blank cheque, put yourself together a top-of-the-range gaming system', then this is what we'd go out and buy.

The 'no holds barred' system demonstrates

some common sense. You won't see an extra £300 spent on a component that, although nice to have, would make no difference to the system's overall games performance.

The second, 'lean 'n' mean' configuration

follows the same pattern, only now your blank cheque has a caveat: make it a quality gaming system to be proud of, but keep it cheap.

What could be simpler? The specifications are checked and updated every month.

NO HOLDS BARRED

Still with the PIII, until the AMD Athlon (a potentially great games chip) motherboard situation sorts itself out to our satisfaction, or until we see decent dual processor support in Win2000. By the way, the OS of choice now becomes Win 98 SE.

Component	Product	Price	Web
Motherboard	Abit BE6	£91	www.abit.com
CPU	Pentium III 500	£335	www.intel.com
Memory	256Mb PC100 RAM	£280	www.insight.com
Disk controller	Built-in UDMA 66	N/A	N/A
Primary graphics	Matrox Millennium G400 Max	£175	www.matrox.com
Floppy drive	Teac 3.5" 1.44Mb	£23	www.teac.com
Hard drive	14.4Gb IBM Titan 14GxP UDMA	£170	www.uk.ibm.com
CD/DVD-ROM	Pioneer DVD-ROM A03 IDE	£137	www.insight.com
Backup	Iomega Zip (100Mb internal)	£76	www.iomega.co.uk
Monitor	Nokia 446Xpro (19" FST)	£580	www.nokia.com
Audio	Terratec Sound system DMX	£129	www.terratec.net/ttuk
Speakers	VideoLogic Sirocco	£199	www.videologic.co.uk
Modem	Pace 56K V90 Voice internal	£75	www.pace.co.uk
Case	ATX Tower	£93	www.insight.com
PSU	Built-in 250W	N/A	N/A
Keyboard	Keytronic KT2000	£21	www.insight.com
Mouse	MS-IntelliMouse USB (Black)	£32	www.microsoft.com
Action game controller	MS-SideWinder Gamepad	£23	www.microsoft.com
Flight joystick	Thrustmaster F22 Pro	£150	www.thrustmaster.co.uk
Throttle	Thrustmaster TQS	£129	www.thrustmaster.co.uk
Rudder/Pedals	Thrustmaster Elite Rudder	£60	www.thrustmaster.co.uk
Driving controls	MS-SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel	£121	www.microsoft.com

TOTAL £2,899

LEAN 'N MEAN

TNT2 boards make a good alternative to the S4-based Stealth – slightly more expensive but slightly faster on average. And even on a low budget with a games focus, we can't stress enough the all-round usefulness of a zip drive to the average computer user.

Component	Product	Price	Web
Motherboard	Abit BH6 v2	£76	www.abit.com
CPU	Celeron 400MHz (Slot)	£88	www.intel.com
Memory	128Mb PC100 RAM	£140	www.insight.com
Disk controller	Built-in UDMA/33	N/A	N/A
Primary graphics	Diamond Stealth III S540	£84	www.diamondmm.com
Floppy drive	Mitsumi 3.5" 1.44Mb	£12	www.mitsumi.com
Hard drive	8.4Gb IBM TITAN UDMA	£135	www.uk.ibm.com
CD/DVD-ROM	Maxi DVD-ROM	£99	www.guillenot.com/uk
Backup	Iomega Zip (100Mb internal)	£76	www.iomega.co.uk
Monitor	Nokia 447Xpro (17")	£386	www.nokia.com
Audio	S8 Live! Value	£56	www.soundblaster.com
Speakers	Labtec 2632	£80	www.labtec.com
Modem	Pace 56K V90 Voice internal	£75	www.pace.co.uk
Case	ATX midi tower	£60	www.insight.com
PSU	Built-in 235W	N/A	N/A
Keyboard	Generic PS/2 Win95	£13	www.insight.com
Mouse	MS-IntelliMouse USB (Black)	£32	www.microsoft.com
Action game controller	MS-SideWinder Gamepad	£23	www.microsoft.com
Flight controller	Saitek Cyborg 3D	£49	www.saitek.com

TOTAL £1,484

We have made every effort to ensure that the prices quoted here are correct at the time of going to press and that only finished retail products are included. Please bear in mind there is a lead time involved between writing and distribution of PCGW, and that the prices quoted are recommended retail from the manufacturer or direct from reputable mail order sites. Do shop around.

MULTIMEDIA

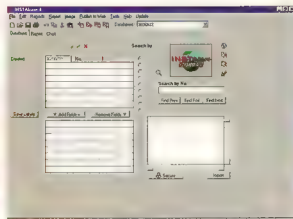


CHANGING ROOMS,

BBC Multimedia,
£29.99

Changing Rooms can take much of the credit for the upsurge in interest in interior design, and the vast numbers of eager shoppers crowding the likes of B&Q on bank holiday weekends. It also must take some of the credit (or is it blame) for the resurgence of the sort of colours that haven't graced most homes since the Seventies. It's hardly surprising that the BBC wanted to cash in on its popularity with a multimedia tool. Hosted by the aptly-named Carol Smillie and with hints and tips from designers Linda Barker and the deliciously theatrical Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, the Changing Rooms CD is, not surprisingly, not your average home design CD. Changing Rooms is an ideas tool. If you're looking for inspiration before you set about transforming your living space, this will point you in the right direction, but don't expect it to have all the answers.

★ ★ NM



INSTABASE 4.0 WEB READY,

Guildsoft,
£49.95

Okay, you've got your Web site up and running and everyone from your mum to your colleagues have been forced to go on-line and have a look. Now what? Well, all joking aside one of the most useful utilities you'll find on a site is some form of database, preferably something that's easy to set up and use.

Instabase 4.0 will prove something of a god-send. It's straightforward and easy to use and the interface has been well thought out and, although not particularly intuitive, covers all the usual utilities; reports, searching facilities and my favourite, the INSTA Web Wizard, an excellent FTP system for getting the finished database on-line. Instabase 4 makes it easy to integrate the database into your existing Web site. A good compromise between functionality and ease of use. 50 quid well spent.

★ ★ ★ NM



THE CLUE FINDERS YEARS 4&5 ADVENTURES,

The Learning Company,
£19.95

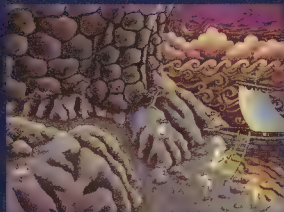
Egypt is the setting for this adventure, where the Clue Finders, a group of four kids, aided by their trusty dog, have to complete puzzles based on maths, geography, science and logic to earn the clues that will help them in their quest. Josie, Sebastian, Lucy and Owen, have gone to Egypt with the rather eccentric professor, but when they open the tomb of an ancient pharaoh, the professor disappears. To find the professor, the ClueFinders must translate an ancient papyrus. To do this, they need the help of a wise old antique dealer and the translation key which is scattered in pieces throughout Egypt. The group must complete puzzles set by local shopkeepers, be quizzed in maths, geography, comprehension, observation and much more. The adventure format makes this very attractive to the age group it's aimed at (ages eight to 10). ★ ★ ★ NM

KIDS' STUFF

ZOOMBINIS MATHS JOURNEY,

The Learning Company,
£19.99

Don't be fooled by the title. This little adventure is not full of equations and sums but, cleverly, it teaches children how to think about solving mathematical problems in a fun way. Your mission is to help the Zoombinis – cute little creatures that look like ping pong balls, with eyes, noses and springs, wheels, skates or whirly helicopters



instead of legs. These dear little creatures lived happy little lives, until the mean old Bloats came along and helped them develop

their businesses, and expand trade routes. But this was as useful to the Zoombinis as it would be to a community of Buddhist monks, so they decided to escape to a new, and more peaceful world. Along the way, they encounter cliffs that are allergic to them, a pizza-eating troll who only likes certain toppings and a ferry captain who wants his passengers arranged in certain way. For ages eight and up, there are graded levels, so they can go back and take a more difficult challenge. Teaching kids how to think, rather than just learn by rote has to be worthwhile. It's fun too. ★ ★ ★ NM

ESSENTIAL GAMES!

RECENTLY RECOMMENDED

Here's a selection of recently reviewed titles that received our highest recommendation



C & G TIBERIAN SUN

(Westwood, Strategy & War, Reviewed: September 1999)
This is Command & Conquer – and once again it is about to become the staple diet for millions of gamers. Perhaps not the unmatched classic that Red Alert was but there's plenty to play and enjoy. The original and still the best.



INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2

(Empire, Sports, Reviewed: September 1999)
If you have a passion for cricket then this will simply take over your life and refuse to let you go. It's not just a superb cricket management sim – it's superb sports management.



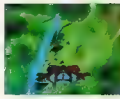
FORCE 21

(Take 2, Strategy & Wargaming, Reviewed: September 1999)
From the people that brought you Rainbow Six, this is their brilliant real-time strategy wargame. And it's great – only one other wargame has delivered this buzz – and that was the formidable, classic, Close Combat III.



LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

(Eidos, Adventure & Roleplaying, Reviewed: September 1999)
An absolutely cracking action adventure – this is Tomb Raider with a nasty streak. Maybe it doesn't take the 3D genre to amazing new levels, but it adds a welcome dark twist – eerie and evocative stuff.



SINISTAR UNLEASHED

(THQ, Action, Reviewed: September 1999)
If you want to let your hair down and bash buttons 'til your fingers bleed, this is your game. Arcade action is back – and it is screaming 'I Live!'. Great to see that the age-old classic arcade form still works in a terrific looking modern game.



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

(Talonsoft, Action, Reviewed: July 1999)
Talonsoft's groundbreaking atmospheric masterpiece – in the new 3D squad-based game genre. This is best described as Commandos in 3D – it's a terrific tactical game of hide and seek set in WWII. The stand-out title of the last few months.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

(Eidos, Sports, Reviewed: April 1999)
Eidos' football behemoth – just shy of 100,000 copies sold in three weeks. All the best features of Champ Man 2 refined and updated with authenticity, depth and sheer footballing passion. Hard-core stats-based football.



KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME

(Interplay, Action, Reviewed: August 1999)
Hugely controversial, violent, top seller. This is a game in which Duke Nukem would be proud to have appeared. Hardly revolutionary, but with great visuals, original game-play twists, combative AI and delightful weaponry.

OTHER RECENT RELEASES

Here's a selection of other recently reviewed titles that received our highest recommendation

Title	Publisher	Game Type	Reviewed
Civilization: Test of Time	Microprose	StratWar	August 99
Dungeon Keeper 2	Reliance	StratWar	August 99
Flight & Magic VFL: For the Soul King Movie	IBD	Advs & Rts sp. sim	August 99
Pro Fitter	The Associates	Simulation	August 99
Order of the Phoenix	Interplay	Action	July 99
Team Fortress Classic for Half Life	Sierra	Online	June 99
Wild World Country	Grimm	Action	June 99
Star Rally: Road Works	Lucas, Lucas & Co	Advs & Rts sp. sim	June 99
Jack Nuckles & Golden Bear Challenge	Activision	Sports	June 99
AI: The Vein Predator	Fox Interactive	Action	May 99
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Sony	Sports	May 99
Yoda's Revenge: Star Wars	Comcast	Simulation	May 99
Act of Treason	Grimm	Sports	May 99
Perpetual Manager: Hockey Nation	Grimm	Sports	April 99
Warzone 2100	Lucas	StratWar	April 99
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Microprose	StratWar	March 99

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MAT BETTINSON ON

It seems hardly a day goes by without yet another of my friends disappearing into EverQuest. Given how popular it is and what an addictive experience it has proved to be, you may wonder why I haven't followed suit. The reason? I don't like trolls and goblins, spells and arrows, tunics and chainmail. Basically, I don't like Fantasy – I like massively multiplayer Sci-Fi.

Why is it that when we go to a server to kill lots of people in multiplayer deathmatch, we do it sci-fi-style, but when we develop a character for the duration, we do it fantasy? It's annoying that there's little coming along to redress this balance. There's a veritable 'bag of holding' full of fantasy-based EverQuest clones, the closest away being Microsoft's Asheron's Call. System Shock 2 scrapes the surface of what can be done with sci-fi roleplaying – and it benefits as a result – though sadly, only in a single-player form. So hang them all, I won't do massively multiplayer until I'm given the universe I want to spend time in.

Continuing the theme of 'sci-fi means action', we're taking a peek at Parsec in this section. Of course, there's also

Unreal Tournament, but I'm desperately trying to avoid prattling on about it endlessly. Although I admit, Unreal Tournament owns me and it will soon own you, too. Suffice it to say, it needs to prove its AI, teamplay modes and so on, for us to remain enthusiastic about Quake III: Arena in the face of this masterpiece from Epic. A demo of Unreal Tournament should be out soon, so keep an eye on GT's site, gaming sites like our own GameSpot, or on the likes of Barrysworld.

By the way, I almost forgot to mention on this month's CD there are Dungeon Keeper II updates which improve the game enormously, with a thousand little tweaks. My tip for the day: throw your warlocks straight into a combat pit. They train up much quicker than in a training room. Same goes for Bile Demons. Darn, looks like there is a fantasy game I like... perhaps there's still time for Starship Keeper, eh Bullfrog?

www.shock2.com

Cooperative multiplayer SS2 patch imminent...

www.theplayfields.co.uk

Loads more pictures and in-game movies from our UT party



I won't do massively multiplayer until I'm given the universe I want

PC GAMING WORLD UNREAL TOURNAMENT PARTY

Fifty gamers battled to win the Unreal trophy

On the night of Sunday the 5th of September – an especially hot evening after the first day of the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) – we held a party at The Playing Fields, located in the heart of London. It was packed out with 50 hard-core gamers who we invited to check out Unreal Tournament.

All 20 of the newly-upgraded AMD Athlon 600 PCs sported the latest release candidate of Epic's upcoming Quake III-beater – that meant machines were in hot demand, so we quickly had to rope off the playing area to get the tournament elimination heats underway. Fifty gamers meant five heats of 10-man deathmatches. Of course, we couldn't let our gamers go in cold, so they got time to kick about in a free-for-all with a couple of bots so they could get used to the game.

Meanwhile, the rest of the partygoers had to remain behind the ropes

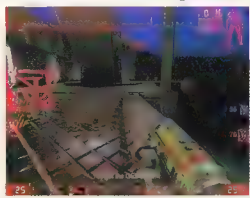
and enjoy the complimentary beer while checking out the action on the big screen. Fortunately, the heats ran smoothly – largely due to Brandon Reinhart and Jack Porter, two of Unreal Tournament's programmers, lending a helpful hand running the servers and the competition.

At the end of the semi-finals two winning candidates came through –

Amok and Hakeem. Through a hard-fought one-on-one duel, Hakeem emerged victorious 21-11 and took home the spiffy Unreal

Tournament trophy (pictured).

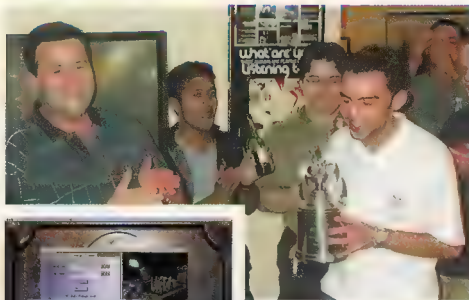
After the game the ropes went down and gamers rushed to have another bash at Unreal Tournament. This time teamplay was the order of the day and several epic games of Capture The Flag were fought until the early hours. The net result? (no pun intended) A big thumbs-up for Unreal Tournament according to all who attended.



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Top left: Hakeem holds his trophy
Top right: Mark Rein, president of Epic Games, reads the inscription
Above: Mark can't help showing it off
Below: Jack Porter, Epic programmer, looks on while a gamer plays UT



WHAT THE PLAYERS THOUGHT

We asked the invited gamers what they thought of Unreal Tournament, with a view to collecting negative as well as positive comments. However, there were not many negative things to say...



"Quake III had better be something special, or Unreal Tournament will simply bury it"

Pete Closs

"It whupped the ass off every other FPS I've seen or heard of for maybe a year down the line"

Richard 'Cabal' Skinner

"Unreal Tournament was the best multiplayer experience I've had"

Chris 'Archaon' Wagge

"The weapons are excellent - much improved, lots more oomph. I even got a few frags using the green muck spreader, and enjoyed doing it!"

Cabal



"The sound effects were amazing - I kept firing the sniper rifle just to hear it, and I loved the gurgle when you take someone's head off with the ripper"

Brian 'Spiny Norman' Russell

"The only fault I can find with UT is that you just don't get time to respect and appreciate the awesome graphical capabilities of the game"

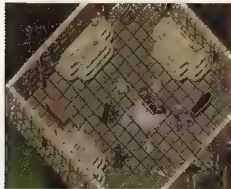
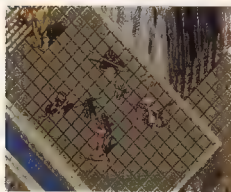
Darren 'Maverick' Hastings

"It was great, the best fun I had all year :-)"

Jeremy 'Catweazel' Hall

"Smooth, slick, very fast & fun"

SkizoldMan



New monsters and new lands to explore in The Second Age, but it's still the same old Ultima with the same isometric mix of gem-like gameplay and criminal flaws

JOINING THE EURO

With The Second Age, Electronic Arts has set up dedicated European servers which would be the first port of call for any new British player about to venture into Britannia for the first time. Otherwise, the servers are busy but the load varies and peak British playing times are reasonably uncrowded. Lag deaths are still a problem, but overall, performance is better than the connection I used to get with the US servers.

So, what of the community to be found on these new European servers? Well, ironically it still seems to have a decidedly American emphasis. Desperately hoping to get a chance to try out the auto language translator (knowing what spell checkers can do, I figured this could be as good a way to start World War III as any) with any German, Japanese or French fantasy fans, I found them damn hard to find among the standard over-loud Yank babble. I can only assume the US influx is simply players looking for a fresh and more open killing field.

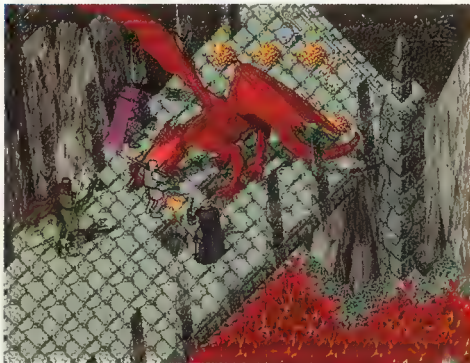
ULTIMA ONLINE: THE SECOND AGE

There goes the neighbourhood

Infamous Ultima Online veterans, quite happy with their place on the US servers will see The Second Age as a welcome expansion pack of new lands, monsters and so forth, bolted neatly on to their Britannia homeland. I'll come to what's in store for them shortly. But if you're completely new to the game there are a few things that need explaining about the whole Ultima Online phenomenon.

Springing from the single-player Ultima line, created by Richard Garriot, Ultima Online is currently the most popular massively multiplayer online roleplaying world. It's classic fantasy stuff: you explore a huge environment with cities and vast dungeons, but the skills system doesn't tie you into a particular class or role, and the gameplay is as diverse as you could hope for – go adventuring, tame animals, craft weapons, wage wars, build cities or simply run a pub. Motivation is the need to generate wealth, as an end in itself and as a means to increasing your firepower.

It's a glorious concept, mostly well executed and extremely addictive – at least sufficiently so to have attracted several hundred thousand registered



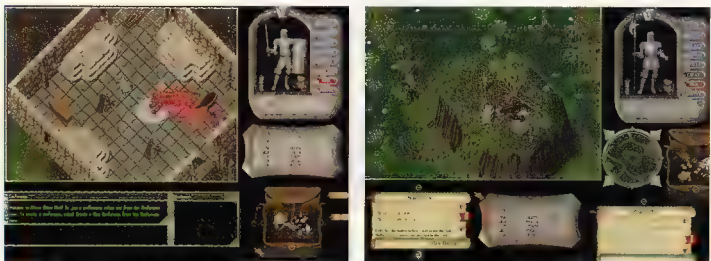
Really big pets win really big prizes in the world of Britannia

players. But it has also some very distinct pros and cons.

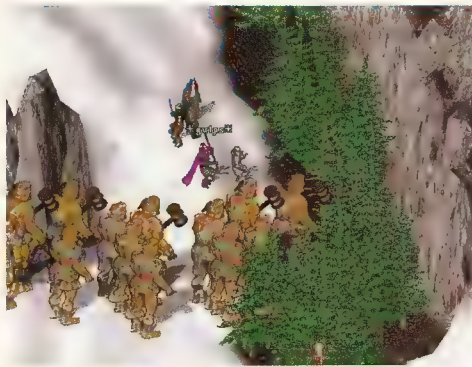
While it has had time to mature since its launch, Ultima Online: The Second Age still has more than its fair share of bugs and instability. It's also a rough and ready place – if you're a gentle soul who doesn't like player-versus-player combat (PvP) then Britannia is not the world for you. Ultima Online: The Second Age is still riddled with player killers and

survival away from safer areas around towns is ridiculously tough. And, from a purists' roleplaying perspective, some may find the more in-your-face first-person 3D views of a game like EverQuest more involving than the isometric camerawork of the Ultima world.

So now to the world of The Second Age. As you'd expect, it includes everything you need to join the world of Britannia, plus all the



Significant improvements to the interface and to the chat and messaging system are all incorporated in The Second Age



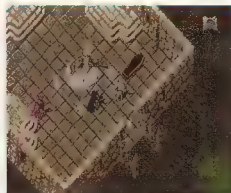
Neville and his chums realised they were improperly dressed for clubbing

enhancements made to Ultima Online since day one: interface improvements like the 'big window', online help and an improved chat and messaging system. The new lands and their inhabitants are undoubtedly the key attraction, however, and in among the lost villages and underground caverns you'll find more creatures to kill, and a far faster re-spawn rate. This makes it easier to accumulate money and weapons, and there's also a better balance of monsters for all levels of player. Thus a major improvement on Britannia.

The two new races (reptilian Ophidians and spider-like Terathans) are tough and include multiple types of fighters and mages. There's a new, rideable creature called an Ostarid, which looks like an avian dinosaur, plus Titans – an impressive Cyclops – and several ice and frost variations on traditional Ultima Online monsters.

Ultima has been something of a victim of its own success insofar as

the existing lands are over-camped and cluttered by player homebuilding. The settlements in The Second Age are few and far between – there's Delucia (a decent-sized town in the southwest) and Papua (grass hut-



ville) – and Origin claims to have designed much of the landscape to prevent rampant house-building. Unfortunately it's not too well executed. The terrain is more unruly than that of Britannia, almost to the point of un-navigability. It's also rather unconvincing in the way that swamps, mountains and so forth, are thrown together. And at times, the terrain moves beyond being a mere annoyance to something of a death trap, since it lends itself to ambushes with ranged weapons and magic – the attack preferred by player killers.

For existing Ultima Online players,



I knew we should have bought a budgie, but you just had to have a dragon...

The Second Age is a \$7 upgrade that you're unlikely to turn down. More room, more creatures and some interesting new travels for very little outlay seems a fair exchange. Newcomers, though, should think long and hard. Ultima Online is undoubtedly an impressive game, but it's a tough place for a newbie to join these days and The Second Age really doesn't do anything to resolve some of the gameplay problems inherent in the overall game. Oh, and one other thing... There's no explanation of how to get to the new lands in the game. To enter via the guarded Moonglow gateway you need a password, and the only place you'll find that is searching the Web or asking other players. So those who don't want to know the result, look away now: say 'recdu' while on the teleporter. 'recsu' to return

PROS: More room to breathe, more races to meet and more critters to bash.

European servers, too

CONS: Poorly thought-out terrain irritates and can often be fatal. Does nothing to smooth over Ultima's rougher edges

Terrance Andy Phillip

DETAILS

LABEL: Electronic Arts

WEB: www.ultimaonline.com

DEVELOPER: Origin

PRICE: £34.99, plus \$10 per month

MULTIPLAYER: 1-300,000...

OUT: 5 July

AGE RATING: ELSPA 7+

SYSTEM

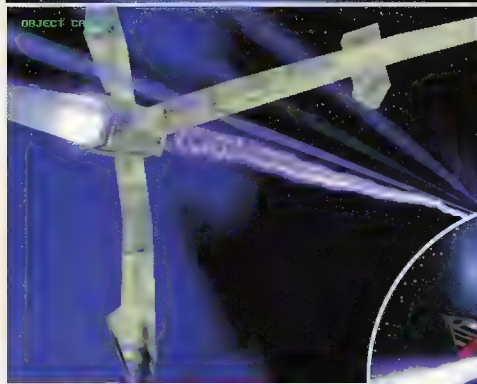
Min Installation: Win95/98, P166, 16Mb RAM
28Kbps modem, 16-bit video, 4x CD. We recommend:
P1123, 64Mb RAM, 56Kbps modem, 8Mb video, 8x
CD Control: Mouse, keyboard. Supports: N/A



WELCOME TO THE LAND

WIREPLAY

WHAT IS SO DIFFERENT ABOUT WIREPLAY NOW?



PARSEC

GENRE: Simulation **LABEL:** Free download only
DEVELOPER: The Parsec Project www.parsec.org

What kind of lunatic would spend three years industriously developing the definitive online space combat simulator and then give it away for free? The members of The Parsec Project don't call it lunacy, they call it 'commercial-quality freeware'. Whatever, Parsec costs nothing, and more importantly, it looks superb.

Grabbing the respectable but aging X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter right by its Yodas, Parsec might well be the game that finally brings multiplayer space combat to the masses. Judging from the short glimpse we had from a couple of downloadable videos and

stunning stills on its Web site, it's clear to see that Parsec has great potential.

Parsec is being peddled not just as a game, but as an entire, persistent online universe for players to populate, explore and, more importantly, blow the crap out of each other. One all-powerful master server will govern the Parsec universe, with each of the physical servers dotted around the Internet being represented by different galaxies in-game, connected by a series of jump gates. Penetrate a gate and the master server will automatically connect you to the right server, visually transporting you to the next



galaxy
in the
universe.

Each galaxy will contain multiple solar systems for players to explore – however, peaceful travelling isn't always going to be possible. The master server will be keeping a track of players statistics as they progress through the game, so it's likely you'll be engaged in combat by aggressive human adversaries hungry to advance their recorded statistics, especially as the developers promise a site proudly displaying the very best fighters as 'Parsec Legends' for all to marvel at.

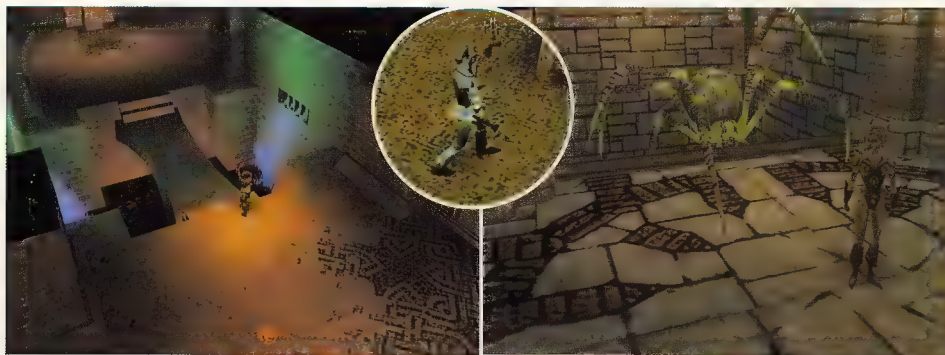
According to the developers a number of platforms have been promised support – currently Parsec will run under 32-bit Windows, Mac, Linux and even good old DOS – and the majority of 3D cards should be supported using the Glide or OpenGL standards.

With the bulk of online skirmish-style servers being first-person shooters like Quake, a quality space combat simulator in a full 360-degree environment would be a breath of fresh air. My gaming will be fantastic if these guys can pull it off.

THE PITCH: Real-time space combat across multiple internet servers

THE PROSPECTS: The price is right! It only has to work to succeed

DOE: Winter



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

GENRE: Strategy & Wargaming **LABEL:** Interplay **DEVELOPER:** Bioware

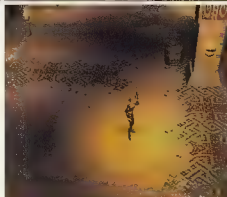
At the recent GenCon show in Milwaukee, Interplay revealed *Neverwinter Nights*, an all-new multiplayer AD&D game from Baldur's Gate developer, Bioware.

Neverwinter Nights takes its name from the 1992 original, which was a multiplayer roleplaying game available on America Online. This game, though, is nothing like that. It uses the MDK 2 3D engine, called Omen, and will be 3D-only. It's due out at the end of 2000, but we got our hands on a technology demo.

The game sports smooth animation and crisp and detailed graphics. The most striking feature is the interface: it's almost invisible. Inventory boxes are transparent and hot-keyed items can be retrieved by right-clicking. You can cast spells, initiate combat, and use items using a system Bioware calls the 'radial menu'. If you want to cast a spell, you click to call

up a menu of eight choices arranged in a circle around your character. These choices include spells, combat, use item, and other actions. You then move your mouse in the direction of the option you want – spells – and click. Another 'radial menu' then appears from which you choose your schools of magic. Once you move in the direction of the magic you want, say, priest spells, click again to get another menu of eight specific spells. You choose the spell you want and click to cast it. You never need to look away from the main game screen, as the radial menu appears as a circle of eight small buttons around your character. It sounds complicated, but Bioware says with practice it becomes second nature.

Neverwinter Nights won't be a persistent, massively multiplayer world like *Ultima Online* or *EverQuest*. Instead, it gives players



the tools they need to create multiplayer D&D games with a real Dungeon Master (DM) and player characters. There'll be a lobby or matching system for gamers to find each other and start online games, but once you have a DM and several players, the DM spawns a server and starts a *Neverwinter Nights* game. It will ship with 28 modules, each with roughly four hours of game time. The modules will form a cohesive and lengthy story, although not all 28 need be played in order to complete the game. The DM, though, will have leeway to jump into characters, adjust monsters, add non-player characters, or tweak gameplay to

make it more or less difficult for players. You'll either be able to play *Neverwinter Nights* as a LAN game, where the DM makes all the rules, or as an Internet game, where a matching service will keep records of popular DMs, best roleplayers, and advanced characters (the Internet games are still hosted by a player DM, not Bioware's servers).

Bioware knows its game is ambitious, but claims the engine is complete and the next step is to implement the modules and game system.

Neverwinter Nights is not due for quite some time, but the announcement of a return to multiplayer D&D, and on such an ambitious scale, is heartening news for all roleplaying fans.

THE PITCH: A return to multiplayer AD&D, and on a massive scale

THE PROSPECTS: Online roleplaying games are taking off big time, so the prospects are excellent

DATE: Late 2000

WELCOME TO THE LAND
WIREFPLAY
WIREFPLAY GOING TO BRING THOUSANDS
MORE GAMERS ONLINE

GREATEST HITS OF ALL TIME

The PC Gaming World readers' greatest ever games of all time. Updated monthly – based cumulatively on your votes (for which we are obviously eternally in your collective debt). It's pretty definitely the most accurate list you'll find anywhere of the best games ever devised. No favouritism here – and the list as you can see stretches back to the birth of gaming on the PC. However if you can get hold of these – whether at full-price, budget or even super-budget, you can be sure they'll play well. If you'd like to vote please follow the instructions in the coupon at the foot of the page. This month: Half-Life continues its meteoric rise – into the All-Time Top 20 for the first time. Elsewhere the best of this last season's titles are beginning to make an impact. Commandos moves up. As do Caesar III, The Settlers III, FIFA 99, Tomb Raider III and RollerCoaster Tycoon. And Aliens Versus Predator is the month's only new entry.

NE – Now Entry RE – Re-Entry

Position	Title	Label	Game Type	Position	Title	Label	Game Type
1	11. Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Westwood	Strat/War	51	52. StarCraft	Blizzard	Strat
2	2. Command & Conquer	Westwood	Strat/War	52	51. Dune II - Battle for Arrakis	Westwood	Strat/War
3	13. Duke	GT	Action	53	53. Screamer	Virgin	Action
4	14. Duke Nukem 3D	GT	Action	54	57. Usak Forces 2: Jedi Knight	LucasArts	Action
5	15. Tomb Raider	Edios	Action	55	54. BF 2000	Ocean	Simulation
6	16. Duke II	Activision	Action	56	55. SimCity	Maxis	Strat/War
7	17. Doom	GT	Action	57	56. Myst	Red Orb	Action
8	18. Age of Empires	Microsoft	Strat/War	58	59. Screamer 2	Virgin	Action
9	19. Civilization	Microsoft	Strat/War	59	60. Ultima Underworld	Origin	Adventure/RPG
10	110. Grand Theft Auto	Take 2	Action	60	58. Discworld II	Pygros	Adventure/RPG
11	111. SimCity 2000	Maxis	Strat/War	61	62. Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	Adventure/RPG
12	112. Doom II	GT	Action	62	64. Tomb Raider II	Edios	Action
13	113. Worms	Team 17	Action	63	61. Final Fantasy VI	Edios	Adventure/RPG
14	115. Theme Hospital	Bullfrog	Strat/War	64	63. Premier Manager '97	Gremi	Sports
15	116. Formula 1 Grand Prix 2	Microsoft	Action	65	65. Arsenal's Year	Midcade	Strat/War
16	114. Diablo	Blizzard	Adventure/RPG	66	73. FIFA 99	EA Sports	Sports
17	117. Warcraft I	Blizzard	Strat/War	67	66. Flight Simulator 98	Microsoft	Simulation
18	121. Fall '96	Serra	Action	68	68. Caesar III	Serra	Strat/War
19	118. Total Annihilation	GT	Strat/War	69	68. Planet General	Midcade	Strat/War
20	119. Dungeon Keeper	Bullfrog	Strat/War	70	66. Warcraft	Blizzard	Strat/War
21	120. Tomb Raider II	Edios	Action	71	67. FIFA 96	EA Sports	Sports
22	121. X-COM: UFO - Enemy Unknown	Microsoft	Strat/War	72	72. Wolf or Lamb 2	Game Tek	Simulation
23	124. Transport Tycoon	Microsoft	Strat/War	73	69. Call of Duty	MicroProse	Strat/War
24	123. The Lighter	LucasArts	Simulation	74	70. Wing Commander IV	Origin	Simulation
25	125. Championship Manager 2	Edios	Sports	75	74. Ut	Game Tek	Simulation
26	126. Championship Manager 2 '97/98	Edios	Sports	76	85. Harpoon	Midcade	Strat/War
27	127. Carnage	SCI	Action	77	75. Syndicate Wars	Bullfrog	Strat/War
28	127. X-COM: Terror from the Deep	Microsoft	Strat/War	78	76. Little Big Adventure 2	Electronic Arts	Adventure/RPG
29	129. Theme Park	Bullfrog	Strat/War	79	77. Dark Forces	LucasArts	Action
30	130. Worms 2	Team 17	Strat/War	80	88. Midcade	Midcade	Strat/War
31	131. Secret of Monkey Island 2	LucasArts	Adventure/RPG	81	78. IndyCar Racing	Serra Studios	Simulation
32	132. Unreal	GT	Action	82	79. The Settlers III	Blue Byte	Strat/War
33	134. FIFA 97	EA Sports	Sports	83	79. X-Wing vs TIE Fighter	LucasArts	Simulation
34	135. Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	Adventure/RPG	84	80. Master of Orion II	MicroProse	Strat/War
35	133. X-Com: Apocalypse	Microsoft	Strat/War	85	81. The D.G.	Dreamworks	Adventure/RPG
36	136. Broken Sword	Virgin	Adventure/RPG	86	82. Eternal Dagger	Midcade	Adventure/RPG
37	137. Heroes of Might & Magic II	Bullfrog	Adventure/RPG	87	83. Syndicate	Bullfrog	Strat/War
38	139. X-Com: Apocalypse	Microsoft	Strat/War	88	83. Little Big Adventure	Electronic Arts	Adventure/RPG
39	138. MercWarrior II	Activision	Action	89	84. Master of Orion	MicroProse	Strat/War
40	140. Railroad Tycoon	LucasArts	Strat/War	90	87. Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	Adventure/RPG
41	141. X-Wing	LucasArts	Strat/War	91	89. RollerCoaster Tycoon	Hasbro	Strat/War
42	145. Blade Runner	Westwood	Adventure/RPG	92	89. C&C Red Alert, The Aftermath	Westwood	Strat/War
43	149. Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	Edios	Strat/War	93	98. Myth: The Fallen Lords	Edios	Strat/War
44	145. Network Q RAC Rally	Europress	Simulation	94	90. Realms of the Haunting	Gremi	Adventure/RPG
45	142. Sam & Max Hit the Road	Adventure/RPG	Simulation	95	91. Worms United	Team 17	Strat/War
46	143. FIFA Road to World Cup 98	EA Sports	Sports	96	92. Ullima Underworld 2	Origin	Adventure/RPG
47	150. Curse Of Monkey Island	LucasArts	Adventure/RPG	97	94. Monopoly	Hasbro	Class/Plz
48	144. Sensible World Of Soccer	GT	Sports	98	NE. Aliens Versus Predator	Fox Interactive	Action
49	147. The Settlers II, Veni, Vidi, Vici	Blue Byte	Strat/War	99	99. Baldur's Gate	Interplay	Adventure/RPG
50	148. MDK	Interplay	Action	100	97. Carnage	SCI	Action

VOTE!

Don't miss your chance to vote. Help select the greatest games ever in our readers' poll

So do you agree with the results of our Readers' Chart? If not you can change them for next month. All you have to do is VOTE!

What games are you playing at the moment? What are your favourite games of all time? Please return the coupon with your choices and ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your experience.

Please fill out the questionnaire below giving us your opinion. We will be printing the coupon every month.

And as a shameless incentive to register your votes, three lucky winners selected from the list will win their choice of one current chart game*

LAST ISSUE'S PRIZE WINNERS:

Daniel Clulow, Burton: John Jones, North Oxford and; Dean Walton, Swindon

What are your five favourite PC games of all time (title/publisher)?

1. / /
2. / /
3. / /
4. / /
5. / /

What are the three games you've played most recently (title/publisher)?

1. /
2. /
3. /

Please complete the following to enter the prize draw

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Daytime telephone no: _____

Email: _____

✓ I want you to conduct more research about games playing habits. ✓ If you would not be interested in taking part in more research please tick this box

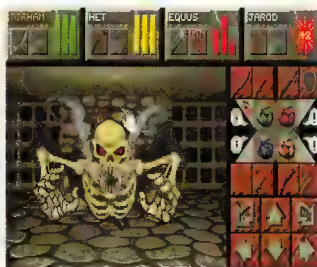
✓ Your personal information will be kept confidential, but from time to time we may want to pass your name and address on to other parties for them to send you information you may be interested in. If you would prefer us not to please tick this box

*Game draw rules: The Editor's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into. No employees or affiliates of PC Game World may enter. No cash equivalent will be given. Maximum RRP of selected game £45

WHERE TO SEND YOUR FORM

It's really easy! Complete the form to date from the magazine – if you don't want to date, photocopy it. You can send the form to us at: PC Gaming World Games Chart, Ziff Davis, International House, 1 St Katharine's Way E1 9UN or fax it to us on 0171 903 8776

PEASANTS REVOLT!



EverQuest (left), born of Dungeon Master II

Worried by current development trends in online roleplaying, Elvis Bacon demands more player power

Much to the surprise of many in the games industry – presumably the same people surprised by the single-player success of Diablo and Baldur's Gate – the massively multiplayer roleplaying experience is turning into a real money spinner for those who find the right formula – and faster than anyone could have predicted.

At around \$10 a month with 300,000 subscribing players, it doesn't take a mathematical genius to see why the Ultima Online team are a happy bunch. Or at \$6 or so a month, why Verant is so happy to see EverQuest

hit 100,000 players in such a short space of time. And why all the rest are suddenly viewing the genre with great interest. Interplay, for example, has Neverwinter Nights in the works, while Microsoft's Asheron's Call is just about to go into final beta. Havas has Middle Earth and Digital Anvil has repositioned Freelancer as massively multiplayer from a Quake-style client/server model. Exciting times.

And, in the long term, this style of gaming is better suited than any other to make the transition to digital TV-style entertainment. From couch potato to couch elf, as it were.

What worries me is that the majority of projects show signs of taking a direction similar to EverQuest. Now, EverQuest is a fine oversized tribute to Dungeon Master, technologically quite marvellous and all that, but it's also essentially safe, sterile and designed to minimise player interaction, especially contentious interaction. If you're going for hundreds of thousands of players, the message seems to be: go for lowest common denominator gaming. Things like PvP, looting, switchable screen modes, character naming, entropy (vis-à-vis item degradation) and so on, all have strong arguments both for and against their existence. The problem in the EverQuest model comes from cumulatively taking the 'no-risk' branch of the decision tree.

True, there are issues of taste here and one person's roleplaying leaves

another person cringing. I'm sure there are more than a few Ultima refugees in EverQuest who find the cosy environment a welcome and reassuring change. But for how long? Particularly given its appallingly clunky chat and guild management system. Online roleplaying worlds are places we

look to live in for a year or more. As additive as the simplistic Dungeon Master-style of gameplay is (and sci-fi or fantasy – it adds up to the same thing), it isn't enough on its own to keep you playing month after month. A massively multiplayer world needs real player interaction and communication. It needs people creating larger-than-life, memorable personalities for others to encounter – the kind of creative challenge that computer opponents can never offer. 'Character development' means creating real personality as much as hacking away to enhance your skills.

Future multiplayer games have to allow scope for this if they hope to achieve real success. My fear is that they will opt for the bland, the safe and the ever-so-responsible approach. Massively inoffensive multiplayer, rather than massively involving multiplayer...

WELCOME TO THE LAND

WIREFPLAY

WIREFPLAY NOW BRINGS THE RUSH OF ITS FASCINATING MULTIPLAYER GAMING TO THE INTERNET - FREE

WIREPLAY.CO.UK/FREE

Wireplay
The games network

ON THE CDS

WHAT'S ON CD A



FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

FreeSpace 2 [Requires 3D card]
 Midtown Madness
 MiG Alley [Requires 3D card]
 Abomination: The Nemesis Project
 Jane's Fleet Command [Requires 3D card]
 Revenant [Requires 3D card]
 Cutthroats: Terror On The High Seas

PATCHES & ADD-ONS

Dungeon Keeper 2
 Kingpin
 Fly!
 Half-Life

GET ONLINE

Wireplay
 Yahoo! Online
 FreeUK Sign Up
 After Dark/ZDNet Online
 PC Gaming World Online
 ZDNet
 GameSpot UK
 Compuserve Information Manager

ESSENTIAL UTILITIES

DirectX 6.1
 WinZip V7.0
 Microsoft ActiveMovie
 QuickTime
 GameSpy 2.13
 ICQ 99b
 MIRC
 WinAMP 2.5
 MouseRate
 PS2 Rate
 TreeSize
 Macra Express
 PaintShop Pro V5

WHAT'S ON 'EM, HOW TO FIND IT AND HOW TO RUN IT FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

Freespace 2

Interplay

A gorgeous-looking space sim, constantly updated since its first outing. FreeSpace 2 continues in the year 2367, 32 years after the Great War, where the imposing forces of the Shivans have surfaced again, threatening the survival of the Terrans and the Vasudans. In this post-war era, rebellion and civil war jeopardise the security of the colonies and the future of both the Terrans and Vasudans. While the rebellion rages in the remote areas of Terran space, players serve as part of the Galactic Terran Vasudan Alliance (GTVA), monitoring and intervening in the interstellar skirmish. This demo has several missions in space, with exciting dogfights against enemy fighters and huge juggernaut starships. The included SquadWar option allows for team-based multiplayer play.

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator

MiG Alley

Empire

From Rowan, the creators of the hugely-successful Flying Corps series, comes MiG Alley. No more shooting at dots! MiG Alley is the definitive up-close-and-personal



50's jet fighter simulation. Without radar-guided missiles, you'll need to get in real close to blow your opponent from the skies. And at a closing speed of 1,000mph, that's not going to be easy... Scaleable involvement lets you zoom into a dogfight or delve into high detail, managing the entire Korean UN air and ground campaign yourself.

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 64Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator

Abomination: The Nemesis Project

Eidos

Abomination takes place in a bleak, post-apocalyptic future where genetically engineered soldiers from an elite rank of the military wage war against the maddened survivors of a horrible plague. Take control of Project Nemesis, and its small troop of super-soldiers, in the desperate fight for some sort of future.

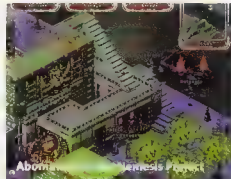


Wings/98, P166, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6

Jane's Fleet Command

Jane's

What's this? A real-time strategy game from the leading flight sim maker! It's a naval warfare game and



FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

MIDTOWN MADNESS

Microsoft

Something of a hit so far for the folks in Seattle – and still in the charts as we write. It doesn't contain traditional tracks, but instead maps out the entire city of Chicago – block by block! Complete with its famous landmarks like the Sears Tower and Wrigley Field, the city lives and breathes like the real thing. Variable traffic and weather conditions, pedestrians, traffic lights, cops, and freeways all await you, and you can drive wherever and how ever you want. That freedom allows you the fun that all driving games should, but rarely do, deliver. This demo includes three vehicles: the city bus, the 99 Ford Mustang, and the Panoz Roadster. A portion of Chicago is included in the trial, enough to host a variety of races all, set in the same area. The trial includes the following events:

- Cruise mode
- BlitZ race
- Checkpoint race
- Cops and Robbers (multiplayer only)

The demo also includes the same Zone support as the retail version. Except for Cops and Robbers, the events above are available both in single and multiplayer.

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 16Mb RAM, DirectX 6



you'll find the world's mightiest arsenals are under your complete control. You give the orders and the entire battle group – fast frigates, Aegis guided missile cruisers, nuclear submarines, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and each plane on them – follows your command. A combat direction screen allows you to survey the whole operation, while a 3D screen lets you zoom-in close and follow the action in real-time.

Designed under a partnership between Jane's Combat Simulations and the experts at Sonalysts – the same people who develop training software for the US Navy.

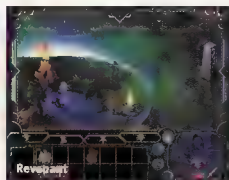
REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 64Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator

REVENANT

Eidos

Revenant is a well-rounded game



that blends adventure, roleplaying, and fighting game elements into a single quest. Play as Locke, a resurrected warrior brought back to life to save a princess. Along the way, you'll equip yourself with various kinds of armour, mêlée weapons and bows, and do real-time battle with dragons, kick-boxing monks and pro-wrestler priests. To quote Cinematix, the developer: 'Did we just say pro-wrestling moves in an roleplaying game? You're damn right we did.'

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, PII 233, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator

CUTTHROATS: TERROR ON THE HIGH SEAS

Eidos

Be a mighty pirate or a winsome

ONLINE

- Wireplay – Get online with the Wireplay client software
- Yahoo! Online
- After Dark/ZDNet Online
- PC Gaming World Online
- ZDNet
- GameSpot UK
- ComputerServe Information Manager

ESSENTIAL UTILITIES

- DirectX 6.1 drivers – newer, better and faster D3D, DirectSound and more!
- WinZip V7.0 – Zip file management for Windows
- Microsoft ActiveMovie – for playing videos and MPGs
- QuickTime – 16-bit and 32-bit versions
- GameSpy – find Quake/Half-Life game servers easily
- ICQ – get in touch on the Net
- MIRC – Internet chat software
- WinAMP – audio player for several types of sounds
- MouseRate – mouse rate checker
- P52 Rate – PS/2 mouse sampling rate changer
- TreeSize – analyse the size of folder trees
- Macro Express – automate your Windows system
- PaintShop Pro V5 – latest upgrade to this popular utility
- Ziff-Davis CD Content Listings – search through all Ziff-Davis' CDs since January 97

royal corsair and sail the seas in the days of pirates, treasures, and adventurous corsairs! Cutthroats lets you control your very own corsair, as well as the ships and galleons of the seafaring age, and plunder, pillage, and do other pirate-like activities! Will you survive to retire a Pirate King? Or will you dance the hempen jig on Gallows Rock?

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6



WHAT'S ON CD B



FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

Rally Championship 2000 [Requires 3D card]

System Shock 2 [Requires 3D card]

Civilization: Call To Power [Special CD Feature!]

Kellogg's Mission Nutrition

GAMEGUIDE

KingPin: Life Of Crime

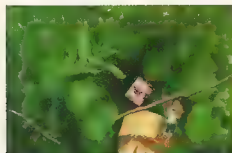
KELLOGG'S MISSION NUTRITION

Kellogg's

Something for the younger folks among us – or those with kids that must be entertained – NOW! The new adventure of Tony and his friends starts with the search for a new home for the infamous Croco King. He swims with his army of little crocodiles across the wide ocean. Suddenly an idyllic island appears on the horizon – peaceful Kellogg's Land. Soon a swarm of evil (but cute) little crocodiles overrun Kellogg's Land and plunder the whole cereal supply and the secret recipes. But you can stop them!

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, Pi66, 16Mb RAM, DirectX 6

WHAT'S ON 'EM, HOW TO FIND IT AND HOW TO RUN IT
FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

Actualize

This is the Europress title we've all been waiting for (after Europress' leisure software division was sold to Hasbro, Rally Championship 2000 will now be released by new outfit, Actualize). Rally Championship brings hard-core action rally driving straight to the PC with more realism than ever seen before.

Including multiple driving positions, fully-operational 3D dashboard instruments, a superb selection of top-flight rally cars, new crash, collision and damage routines and comprehensive multiplayer options – adding up to the most exciting driving experience you can have without actually getting into a car and doing the real thing. Let the astounding graphics amaze you – try this demo, immediately!

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

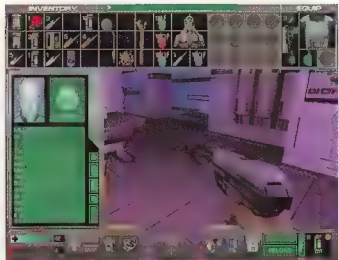
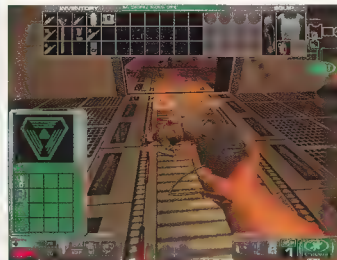
Electronic Arts

Superb demo of PC Gaming World's five-star rated and long-awaited sequel to 1994's acclaimed sci-fi action roleplaying game – take a look at our review this issue on page 118. Following on from Looking Glass' successful Thief: The Dark Project, System Shock 2 runs on an enhanced version of Thief's 3D engine. The game combines action and roleplaying elements in a sci-fi/horror environment, and

promotes non-linear character development, allowing you to customise your character and playing style by offering you a high degree of flexibility. The demo lets you play the game's first level (the Von Braun spaceship's Med-Sci level, which is populated with zombie crewmen). There will be 10 levels in total in the full version.

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings/98, P200, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6, 3D accelerator



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FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER SPECIAL



CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER – FULLY PLAYABLE DEMO

Activision

The Civilization: Call To Power demo contains a small sample of the full game covering approximately one-fifth of the timeline, units, advances, buildings and wonders found in the full game. We highly recommend you play the tutorial, which can be accessed in the game by choosing 'Single Player', then 'Play Tutorial'. If you're new to the whole Civilization-style experience, this is a great place to learn how to play. We hope that you enjoy this demo of Civilization: Call To Power!

REQUIREMENTS:

Wings9/98, P200, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER – V1.1 PATCH

This new patch updates the game with Hot Seat Play, Play By Email and New Scenario Options. A new suite of build queue messages and trade routes can now be toggled on and off and there are many more fixes and tweaks on the patch.

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER – MAP EDITOR

Ever wanted to make your own scenarios? Well now you can with this great full featured map editor for Civilization: Call To Power.



KINGPIN GAMEGUIDE

Another fabulous walkthrough and strategy guide from GameSpot's GameGuides. Again, this month's fantastic PDF guide can be printed out to provide the definitive and decidedly huge 113-page guide to Xatrix's superb gangster shooter. The Adobe Acrobat 4.0 'PDF' reader package is also provided.

● Check out: www.gameguides.com for loads more fantastic GameSpot GameGuides



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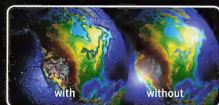
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